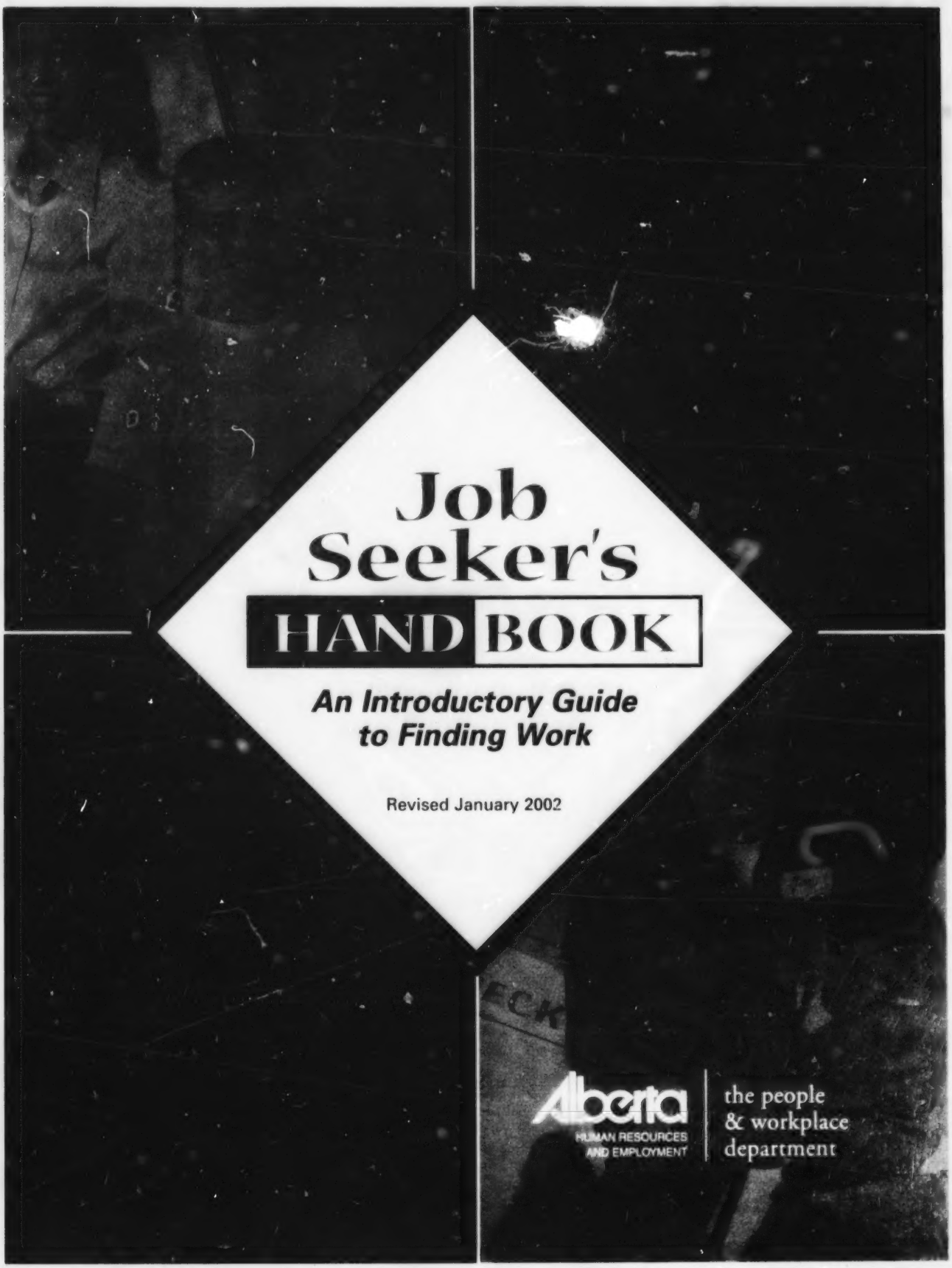

Job Seeker's HANDBOOK

An Introductory Guide to Finding Work

Revised January 2002

Alberta
HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYMENT

the people & workplace department

This book is written for people who are new to looking for work or who have been out of the workforce for a long time. It will show you the basics about finding a job and help you to:

- identify your employability skills
- explore the tools used to find work – job applications, résumés, cover letters, and portfolios
- explore the skills used to find work – networking, information interviewing, and interview skills
- identify ways to stay positive and handle rejection
- connect with further information and resources.

This information was accurate to the best of our knowledge, at the time of printing. Labour market information and educational programs are subject to change, and you are encouraged to confirm with additional sources of information when making career, education and employment decisions.

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READ THIS FIRST

The best jobs don't necessarily go to the most qualified applicants; they go to the best job seekers.

Is this the book for you?

Job Seeker's Handbook is a basic, step-by-step guide to **help you find entry-level work**. It will answer your questions about the complete job search process. If you are looking for your first job, your first job in a long time or your first job in Canada, this guide will show you how to assess your skills, target your work search, write résumés and cover letters and practice interview skills.

But, if you have already been in the workforce for a long time or have post-secondary education or training in your desired field, you may be more interested in *Advanced Techniques for Work Search.* It is a guide designed to help you improve your work search strategies and is available at places listed under "Where To Get More Information" at the end of this book.

A few words on the job market

More and more employers are hiring temporary, part-time and contract workers, and using computers to screen applicants. You'll have greater success finding work if you keep two things in mind while you're looking — be current and be flexible.

- *Use current work search methods.* The most effective work search methods take time, organization and hard work. The answer-a-few-ads-and-see-what-happens approach generally doesn't work very well, if at all. To find work, you have to be willing to work as hard at finding work as you would on the job. If you are currently unemployed and looking for full-time work, that means you should be spending 40 hours a week on your work search.

Nowadays, work comes in many forms. It may not always be packaged in neat little bundles called "jobs", so the words "work" and "jobs" are used interchangeably throughout this book.

- *Consider the possibility of accepting temporary or part-time work, or doing project work on a contract basis.* It will give you a chance to show employers what you can do. Later, if your employer creates a permanent position, you will have a big advantage over other applicants because the employer already knows you. (Unless, by then you have decided to continue working on a project basis because you enjoy the variety and challenge of working for several employers at the same time and/or changing projects frequently.)

Building a successful job search is like building a house. If the foundation is poor, the whole structure is weak. To build a strong work search foundation, follow these steps.

1. Get started by getting organized, identifying your skills, and deciding what types of work you are looking for (Chapter 1).
2. Find suitable work opportunities by using work search methods that fit your circumstances *and* the kind of work you want (Chapter 2).
3. Market your skills by presenting them effectively via portfolios, résumés, cover letters and application forms, and by talking to employers (Chapter 3).
4. Maintain a positive attitude (Chapter 4) by
   - making sure your expectations are realistic
   - learning from your experiences
   - taking good care of yourself
   - wrapping up your work search properly
   - keeping your eyes open and planning ahead.

If you have been looking for work for some time already and are feeling discouraged, you may want to read Chapter 4: Going the Distance first.

Learning how to look for work is much the same as learning any other skill. First you learn the basics, then you practice. The best way to use this guide is to read it once, and then review each section more carefully as you put work search strategies into practice.

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GETTING STARTED

A job search is like any other kind of search. If you know what you are looking for and where to look, you are more likely to find it. If your search is well organized, your chances are even better. So, it makes sense to get started by:

1. getting organized
2. finding out what employers want and what you can provide
3. finding out where someone like you is needed.

Getting Organized

Getting organized means more than making sure you have all the things you will need to find and start work as soon as possible. It also means using your time and energy efficiently and effectively.

Equipment and supplies

If possible, find a place where you can keep all the things you'll need together:

- a desk or table with good lighting
- office supplies such as pens, paper, envelopes, stapler
- a telephone and answering machine (or voice mail service)
- a computer with a laser printer and access to the Internet
- this book.

If you don't have easy access to a computer or answering machine, rent one or find out where related services are offered in your community. Most communities in Alberta have at least one public access computer located in an educational institution (e.g. a high school or college), a public library, an Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre (see "Where To Get More Help" at the back of this book for a list of phone numbers) and/or other service agencies. Ask around – some agencies will also take messages for job seekers who do not have access to voice mail messaging or an answering machine. If necessary, arrange for a trusted friend to take messages for you when you are away from a phone.

Writing a resume should not be your first step. Before you can write a really effective resume, you need to know what skills employers are looking for, which ones you have and where they are needed.

Whether it is a whole room or a tabletop, try to keep your work search area as organized and pleasant to return to as possible.

Social Insurance Number

To work in Canada, you must have a Social Insurance Number (SIN). If you don't already have one, go to a Canada-Alberta Service Centre (CASC) or Human Resource Centre of Canada (HRCC) and apply in writing. You will need two pieces of identification (e.g. driver's license, birth certificate, passport, Alberta Health Care Insurance Card). CASC and HRCC offices are listed in the White or Blue Pages of the telephone book under Government of Canada.

If you have lost your Social Insurance Card, report the loss to the nearest CASC or HRCC office to prevent others from using it illegally. There is a small fee for a replacement card.

Time management

If you are unemployed, you owe it to yourself to put as much time and energy into your job search as you would into working. If you are employed, your work search may take longer because you have less time available to devote to your job search on a daily basis. Either way, drawing up a work search schedule will help to keep you motivated and on track.

Looking for work is a full time job.

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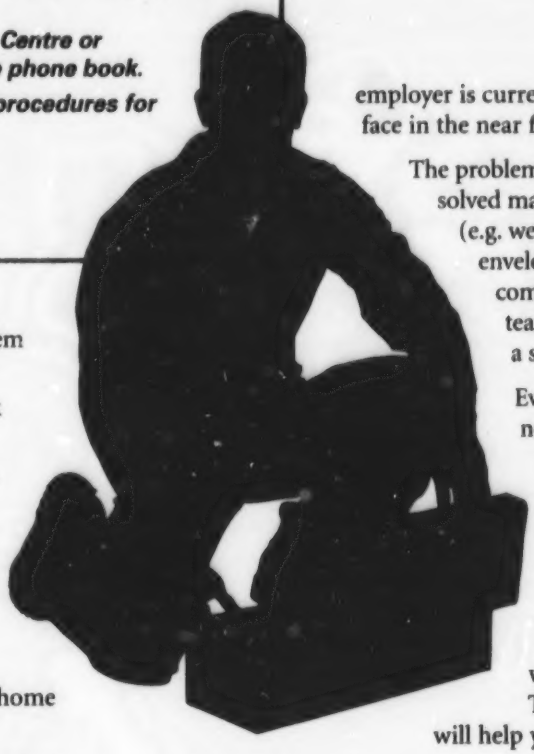
Putting off getting started? If so, start small. Make a list of the things you have to do. If you can't do anything on the list in less than a half hour, break down the tasks on your list into smaller "bite-size" things to do. For example, if one of the tasks on your list is to get a Social Insurance Number (SIN), you might break the work involved down as follows:

- ***Find the nearest Canada-Alberta Science Centre or Human Resource Centre of Canada in the phone book.***
- ***Call to find out about office hours and procedures for applying for a SIN.***
- ***Figure out how to get there.***
- ***Go and fill out the forms.***



You will use your time most efficiently if you:

- schedule short breaks as often as you need them to refresh yourself and keep up a steady pace
- make lists of things you have to do and check tasks off as you complete them
- do similar things at the same time (e.g. make all of your telephone calls at one time instead of returning to the phone to make calls several times a the day)
- change from one type of activity to another at regular intervals (e.g. spend an hour making telephone calls, then go to the library to do some research before returning home to work on your résumé).

If people expect you to be available to do other things when you should be looking for work, talk to them about your plans and describe your schedule. Ask for their understanding and co-operation.

If your friends and family are willing to help you with your job search, let them! They can be a big help in identifying your skills, targeting your job search and finding employment opportunities.

What Employers Want and You Have

Employers are looking for people who:

- are honest, positive, responsible, adaptable, willing to learn and safety-conscious
- work productively in a team environment
- can solve problems (in particular, problems the employer is currently facing or will face in the near future).

The problems employers need solved may be relatively simple (e.g. we need someone to stuff envelopes) or extremely complex (e.g. we need a team of people to design a space station).

Even if you have little or no paid work experience, you already have some of the skills employers need. The key to work search success is to identify your strongest skills and where they are needed. The following exercises will help you get started.

What do you have to offer?

Make a few photocopies of the following checklist of employability skills and show it to people who know you well and will be honest with you (family members, friends, teachers, former co-workers or employers). Ask them to check off statements they think apply to you. At the same time, do the exercise yourself. Then compare what you said to what they said, and talk about why you/they checked off some items and not others.

When you are doing this exercise, check off the skills at which you are competent. Competent means you are able to perform the activity as well as most people (e.g., check off "plan and manage time" if you do that as well as most people). You don't have to be an expert at it to check off a skill.

When you talk to others about this exercise, ask them to check off things you do as well as most people.

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Ask your references to help you with this exercise.

Personal Skills

Positive attitudes and behaviours

- ❑ feeling good about yourself – confident that you can make a positive contribution in work, school, family and leisure situations
- ❑ maintaining high ethical standards – dealing with people, problems and situations honestly
- ❑ giving credit where credit is due – recognizing your own and other people's good efforts
- ❑ taking care of your health – eating a balanced diet, getting enough rest and exercise, etc.
- ❑ managing addictions – admitting to any addictions you have, and getting help or treatment
- ❑ showing interest and initiative by getting involved in existing activities or starting new ones

Responsible

- ❑ organizing your work site – keeping your work area neat and clean; taking care of tools, materials and equipment
- ❑ planning and managing your time to achieve goals
- ❑ anticipating future financial needs, setting financial goals and deciding how you will manage your money (e.g. paying off credit cards at the end of each month; saving/investing)
- ❑ setting goals and priorities to balance your work and personal life
- ❑ following through with time and financial plans, and making adjustments when necessary
- ❑ risking, when appropriate – assessing, weighing and managing physical, emotional and financial risk
- ❑ accepting responsibility for your actions and the actions of your group
- ❑ being socially responsible and contributing to your community (e.g. obeying laws, volunteering)

Adaptable

- ❑ working alone or as part of a team
- ❑ working on several tasks or projects at the same time
- ❑ being innovative and resourceful (identifying and suggesting different ways to get work done)
- ❑ accepting change and using it to your advantage
- ❑ accepting feedback and learning from your mistakes
- ❑ coping with uncertainty (making decisions when you are not sure what the outcome will be)

Learn continuously

- ❑ always learning and growing
- ❑ being aware of your personal strengths, and areas that need improvement or development
- ❑ setting your own learning goals instead of waiting for someone else to tell you what you should learn
- ❑ identifying and using learning opportunities and sources of learning
- ❑ planning for and achieving learning goals

Work safely

- ❑ being aware of personal and group health and safety practices and procedures, and acting accordingly
- ❑ managing stress – knowing the causes of personal and professional stress, and coping with demands and pressures

Teamwork Skills

Work with others

- ❑ getting along – demonstrating respect and caring about the feelings of others; being considerate
- ❑ using tact – being discrete and diplomatic, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues
- ❑ supporting – helping others with their problems; supporting others' decisions and initiatives
- ❑ accepting authority – being able to work under supervision
- ❑ respecting differences – appreciating diversity; accepting the uniqueness of individuals
- ❑ co-operating with others to accomplish shared goals

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- ❑ clarifying the group's goals and objectives when necessary
- ❑ being flexible – respecting and being open to others' opinions and contributions
- ❑ stating opinions – having the confidence and assertiveness to say what you think
- ❑ accepting feedback without becoming angry or overly defensive
- ❑ contributing by sharing information and expertise
- ❑ leading, or supporting when appropriate, by motivating others to perform well
- ❑ confronting – telling others things they may not want to hear about their behaviour, habits, etc.

Participate in projects and tasks

- ❑ doing your part – working to acceptable standards
- ❑ being timely – completing work on time to meet project deadlines; arriving at meetings on time; responding to messages reasonably quickly
- ❑ determining priorities – deciding what is most important and doing that first
- ❑ scheduling – predicting how much time tasks will take; setting time frames for activities
- ❑ initiating – taking the first step; getting things started
- ❑ planning – developing projects or ideas through systematic preparation, and deciding in which order and at what time events will occur
- ❑ organizing – co-ordinating the people and resources necessary to put a plan into effect
- ❑ coaching – providing one-to-one or small group assistance to help others achieve a goal
- ❑ providing feedback – accurately describing an individual's work, behaviour, appearance, etc. in a helpful and considerate way
- ❑ making decisions – choosing a course of action and accepting responsibility for the consequences
- ❑ carrying out projects/tasks from start to finish with a clear idea of what you want to achieve
- ❑ selecting and using appropriate tools and technology
- ❑ reviewing how time has been used and making changes that will increase efficiency
- ❑ adapting to changing requirements and information
- ❑ keeping track of how well projects/tasks are progressing and looking for ways to improve

Fundamental Skills

Communication skills

- ❑ reading – getting information from written materials; following written instructions
- ❑ reading and understanding information presented in nonverbal formats (e.g. graphs, charts, diagrams)
- ❑ writing – using good grammar to write clear sentences and paragraphs; being able to express yourself/explain things in writing
- ❑ talking – being able to provide information effectively in ordinary settings
- ❑ public speaking – being able to keep the audience's attention while delivering a speech
- ❑ listening – paying attention to what other people say to understand and appreciate their points of view, and responding appropriately
- ❑ questioning – asking the right questions to obtain useful information, or to help others gain insight
- ❑ explaining – being careful and clear in what you tell people, so they understand quickly and easily
- ❑ resolving conflicts – bringing conflicts to successful conclusions
- ❑ persuading – convincing others to do what you want
- ❑ negotiating – bargaining with others to solve a problem or reach an agreement
- ❑ teaching – understanding group dynamics and instructing others

The skills checklist is based on The Conference Board of Canada profile of Employability Skills 2000+. For more information, check out their website at www.conferenceboard.ca/education

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- ❑ chairing meetings – presiding over a group of people who come together for a purpose; listening, speaking, encouraging discussion, and following an agenda
- ❑ sharing information by using information and communications technologies (e.g. email, voice mail)

Information management skills

- ❑ following directions – completing tasks as directed
- ❑ maintaining records of inventory, budgets or other information
- ❑ recording – using planners such as calendars and appointment books to keep track of activities
- ❑ organizing information – keeping orderly records (e.g. files, binders of information)
- ❑ filing – sorting information into an organized system
- ❑ scheduling – keeping track of projects, timetables, intineraries, etc.
- ❑ researching – locating and gathering information, using appropriate technology and information systems (e.g. computers, library classification systems, internet search engines)
- ❑ analyzing information – breaking it down to basic elements
- ❑ applying knowledge and skills from one or more disciplines (e.g. arts, languages, science, technology, math, social sciences, humanities)

Numerical Skills

- ❑ counting – determining how many items there are in a group
- ❑ calculating – using basic arithmetic: adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing
- ❑ measuring – using tools or equipment to determine length, angle, volume or weight
- ❑ estimating – judging the cost or size of things; predicting the outcome of an arithmetic problem before it is calculated; forecasting the cost of products and services
- ❑ budgeting – planning how you will spend money; deciding what to buy and how much to spend, or how to get work done the most cost-effectively
- ❑ deciding what needs to be measured or calculated
- ❑ observing and recording data, using appropriate methods, tools and technology

Thinking and problem solving skills

- ❑ assessing situations and identifying problems
- ❑ seeking different points of view and evaluating them based on facts
- ❑ recognizing that there are often several aspects to problems (e.g. human, technical, scientific)
- ❑ investigating – gathering information in an organized way to determine facts or principles
- ❑ analyzing – breaking concepts/problems into parts so each part can be examined
- ❑ being creative and innovative in exploring possible solutions
- ❑ using scientific, technological and mathematical ways of thinking to gain and share knowledge, solve problems and make decisions
- ❑ evaluating solutions to make recommendations or decisions
- ❑ synthesizing – putting facts and ideas together in new and creative ways; finding new ways to look at problems and do things
- ❑ acting on your conclusions
- ❑ checking to see if a solution works, and taking opportunities to improve on it

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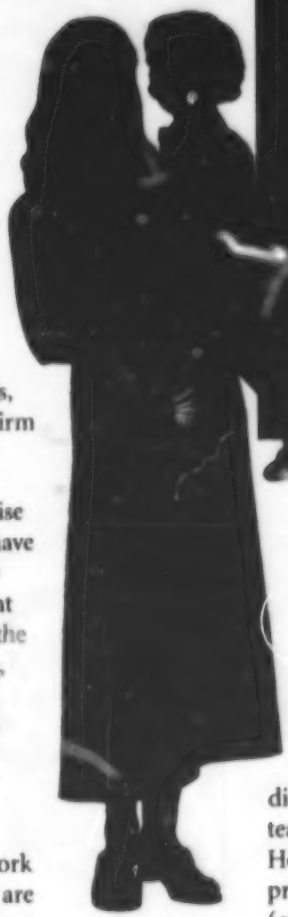

Did you check off "feeling good about yourself"? If not, employers will pick up on your lack of confidence and doubt your abilities too. Read Chapter 4: Going the Distance, and talk to someone you trust. Career advisors and employment counsellors are available to help with your work search by phone and in person (see "Where To Get More Help" at the back of this book).

If you ask your references to help you with this exercise, they will be better prepared to answer questions about you. Keep in mind that your references should be people in positions of authority (e.g. supervisors, teachers, group leaders) who can confirm that you did what you say you did.

If you ask others to complete this exercise too, you may find that they think you have more employability skills than you give yourself credit for. Or, you may find that they do not see you as having some of the skills you think you have. In either case, don't argue. Listen to their reasons as objectively as you can – what you learn about how you are perceived by others could greatly improve your chances of finding work and staying employed.

Which personal management, teamwork and fundamental employability skills are your strongest skills? Which ones do you want to use and develop? These are the skills you should focus on in the next exercise.

Where and when have you used your skills?

One of the most effective ways to let employers know that you have the skills they are looking for is to describe situations in which you have used those skills. For example, describing situations in which you have shown you can work well with others is much more convincing than simply calling yourself a "team player".

Employers will be even more impressed if you describe the positive results you have achieved. For example, describe what happened after you took responsibility for a task, or how other people's behaviour changed as a result of your efforts to motivate them. Or, tell employers about an award you received for good attendance or a good safety record. Better yet, show them the award or other evidence.

1. At the top of separate pages (paper or electronic), list each of the employability skills you identified in the "What do you have to offer?" exercise.

2. Under each skill, briefly describe three situations in which you have used the skill.

Be specific. What needed doing and why? What did you do? How did you contribute if it was a teamwork situation? Where did you do it and when? How? Name the tools you used (e.g. computer programs), describe the types of people you consulted (e.g. teachers, co-workers, experts), the tasks/steps involved, the problems you encountered and how you dealt with them, and what happened as a result.

If you need more help identifying and describing your skills:

- visit the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website (www.alis.gov.ab.ca) and follow the Employment link to the Alberta Work Search On-line feature
- talk to someone at one of the places listed under "Where to Get More Help" at the end of this book and ask for a copy of *Advanced Techniques for Work Search*
- visit your local public library or book store and check out some of their career planning and job search list.

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Finding Out Where Your Skills Are Needed

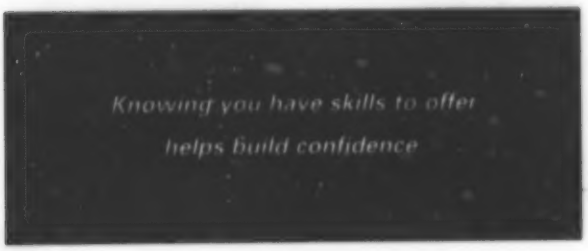
If the types of employers who need your skills are obvious (e.g. you just graduated from a training program for a particular type of work), you can skip to the "Researching Work Options" section. If not, the following exercises will help you decide where you are most likely to find employers who need someone like you.

You'd be good at...

1. As quickly as you can, list all of the kinds of work you can think of that you could do well now or could learn on the job.
2. Ask your family and friends to think of different types of work you would be good at, and add any new ideas to your list.

   Don't argue if someone suggests something you think is out of the question. Sometimes, ideas that don't seem to have much merit at first can spark more interesting ideas later on.

   Have fun – get a group of people together and brainstorm ideas. If you have friends who are looking for work too, you can bounce some ideas around about what they would be good at too.
3. Group the ideas you have gathered by employment field or industry.



Telephone directory exercise

1. Glance through the Yellow Pages index of your telephone directory to get an overview of the categories. The index is usually located at the front or back of the directory. If the index is quite long, divide it into sections and work on one section at a time.

   If you are interested in government work, use the government office listings that are often in a "blue pages" section. The blue pages list federal, provincial and municipal government offices.
2. Go through the listings title by title. Ask yourself the following question(s) for each title.

   Am I interested in this field?

   If not, move on to the next title.

   If so, ask yourself the next question.

   Do I need special knowledge or experience to qualify for work in this field?

   If not, check off the title.

   If you don't know, check off the title - you can find out for sure later.

   If so, ask yourself the next question.

   Do I have the necessary knowledge or experience, or would I be willing to get it?

   If not, move on to the next title.

   If so, check off the title.
3. From the ones you checked off, choose the employment fields that look the most interesting to you. For a list of local employers in each field, simply turn to the page number beside the title in the index.

As you go through the Yellow Pages index and/or blue pages of your directory, you may find that you are checking off too many titles (more than 30). If so, you can afford to be more selective. If you are checking off very few titles and are not willing to move to another

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community to seek work, you may have to be less selective.

If you are having other difficulties with this exercise, talk to a trusted friend or counsellor about your expectations and the local employment situation.

Researching work options

There are basically three ways to learn about work options: read print materials, search the Internet, and talk to people who have first-hand knowledge.

Read about employment fields

A lot of information about employment fields can be found in the reference, periodicals and non-fiction sections of your local library. Business magazines, newspaper articles, occupational profiles and industry directories contain a wealth of information for job seekers.

If you know very little about an industry or employment field, look for basic information about:

- primary products or services
- how products or services are marketed and the level of competition in the industry
- research and development activities
- the challenges employers are facing
- which companies are growing.

Introduce yourself to the reference librarian and explain what you are looking for. Librarians can be very helpful if you clearly describe the types of information you need.

Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres are another good source of work search information (see "Where To Get More Help" at the back of this book).

Search the Internet

Much information on careers and employment is available on the Internet. If you don't have easy access to the Internet, use the public access computers in public libraries, cyber cafes, and Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres.

The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website (www. alis.gov.ab.ca) is an Internet gateway to all sorts of career, learning and employment information.

- Click on the Career link to get to OCCINFO, a database of Occupational Profiles that describes about 500 different types of work.
- Click on the Employment link to get to Alberta Work Search On-line, a guide to finding work on the Internet.

Talk to people who know

People employed in a specific employment field or industry can give you information you may not be able to find in print or on the Internet. For example, they can tell you

- what job titles are usually used in their industry for the type of work you want,
- where people who do that type of work are employed, and
- how most people find work in the industry.

They can confirm what you learn from reading, and answer any questions your library and Internet research left unanswered.

If you know people who work in some of the fields that interest you, ask them if they would be willing to spend some time with you discussing their industry. Talk to more than one person – you are more likely to get a balanced picture that way.

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If you don't know anyone working in fields that interest you, ask your friends, relatives and acquaintances to introduce you to people they know in those fields. You may also be able to obtain information and referrals from related professional associations or unions.

Tell the people you talk to that you are looking for information. Describe the types of jobs and employment fields that interest you. Ask for referrals to people who may have additional information.

If you research several different fields of employment before you start looking for specific job opportunities, you will be much better prepared to follow up suitable job leads when you find them.

Do any of the following statements reflect your thinking right now?

I don't like to bother other people.

People like to help. It makes them feel good about themselves. Let people know that they can help by simply taking a few minutes to talk about their employment field. Most people wouldn't consider it a "bother" at all!

I don't know many people.

You don't have to know many people. If you know one or two people, ask them to refer you to people they know who work in the employment fields that interest you. They may even be willing to introduce you to these people.

I don't like to admit that I am unemployed.

Many valuable workers find themselves temporarily out of work through no fault of their own. Don't shut yourself off from people who can help by providing information and support!

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FINDING WORK

Recipe for job search success: work hard, work smart, and use a variety of work search methods.

Finding work opportunities takes detective work. You are looking for information about potential employers, and who is hiring now or might be hiring in the near future.

Finding work would be much easier if the term "job market" actually referred to a place where employers and job seekers meet and make mutually beneficial deals. Unfortunately, no such marketplace exists. Both job seekers and employers must use a variety of methods to find one another.

Ways to Find Work

There are many ways to find employers who need your skills. From the following list, choose the two methods you think are the most effective in most circumstances.

- ❑ Attending workshops and taking other learning opportunities.
- ❑ Registering with private employment/placement agencies.
- ❑ Frequently checking job postings at Canada-Alberta Job Order Bank Services (JOBS) kiosks.
- ❑ Hearing about work opportunities through friends and acquaintances.
- ❑ Contacting executive search firms.
- ❑ Posting your résumé on employment-related websites.
- ❑ Reading the advertisements in the Classified and Career sections of local newspapers.
- ❑ Using the services of the placement office at a post-secondary education institution you have attended.
- ❑ Watching for "job available" signs in the windows of local businesses.
- ❑ Approaching employers directly and asking about job openings.
- ❑ Paying attention to news reports about new projects, and thinking about the types of work that will be generated and where.
- ❑ Reading the job ads in trade magazines.
- ❑ Meeting people in fields that interest you by doing volunteer work.
- ❑ Placing "employment wanted" ads in newspapers, trade magazines or on the Internet.
- ❑ Searching career sites, bulletin boards, and companies' home pages on the Internet.
- ❑ Consulting a career or employment counsellor.

If you chose "hearing about work opportunities through friends and acquaintances" as generally the most effective method and "approaching employers directly" as the second most effective method, you are right.

Although different methods of finding work are more effective in different circumstances, more successful job seekers find work through personal contacts (networking) and approaching employers directly than through all other job search methods combined! That's because most employment opportunities are never advertised or posted electronically. They are in the "hidden job market."

Also, many new types of work are constantly emerging. If you have some of the required skills, you might be able to learn the rest on the job. If not, you might be able to acquire the necessary technical skills through short training programs. However, if you do not realize that you are qualified to apply, these opportunities are also hidden from you.

So how do you find out which employers are looking for workers, and which new work opportunities you might qualify for? By using a combination of the work search methods listed previously, but concentrating on networking and contacting employers directly.

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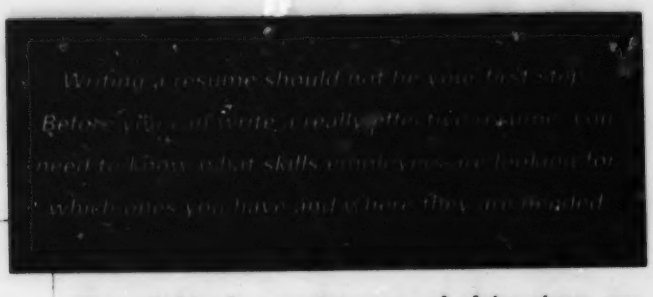


Networking and Information Interviewing

NETWORKING is an organized way to make links from the people you know to the people they know. It is a process of linking contacts together to form a "net" of personal contacts who can provide support and information.

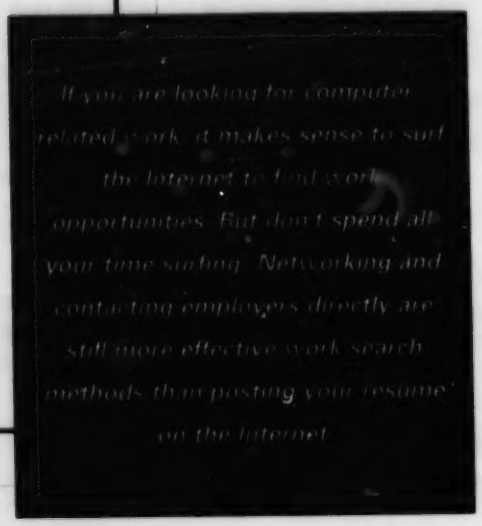
INFORMATION INTERVIEWING is talking to people who work in fields that interest you about how they found work and where they suggest you should look for work. It is *not* asking people for a job! You are looking for advice, not putting people on the spot by asking them to hire you. If they do happen to have a job opening and are in a position to hire you, they will probably tell you. Then you can decide whether to pursue the opportunity right away or not. If you don't have a good overview of opportunities and hiring practices in your target employment fields yet, it might be a good idea not to apply right away.

Why are most work opportunities never advertised?

Put yourself in the shoes of a busy employer. If you advertise a position, you will have to spend a lot of time reading applications and interviewing people. It is much easier to

- ***wait for a motivated job seeker to come to you, and/or***
- ***ask your employees and colleagues if they know of a qualified, reliable person who is looking for work.***

If you can find someone suitable this way, why bother advertising the position?



Through friends, acquaintances and advice-givers, you can eventually reach just about anyone you would like to interview. One person can put you in contact with several others, who can put you in contact with many more people.

Who should you talk to?

Everyone! Your hairstylist's brother may work in an industry that interests you. Or your neighbour may know someone you should talk to. You'll never know until you ask.

People whose work involves a lot of contact with other people can be particularly helpful. If you know any teachers, social workers, religious leaders or community leaders, for example, be sure to talk to them about your skills and work search targets.

Start networking by making a list of people you know, and deciding which ones to contact first.

SHOULD YOU HAVE A BUSINESS CARD, EVEN IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY UNEMPLOYED?

Yes. The people you talk to may ask for your telephone number or email address, so they can let you know when they hear about work opportunities.

You can print business cards quite cheaply on computers by using special card stock available from office supply stores. Or, you can pay a printer to make more professional-looking cards with your name and telephone number, and a fax number or email address if you have one. If you wish,

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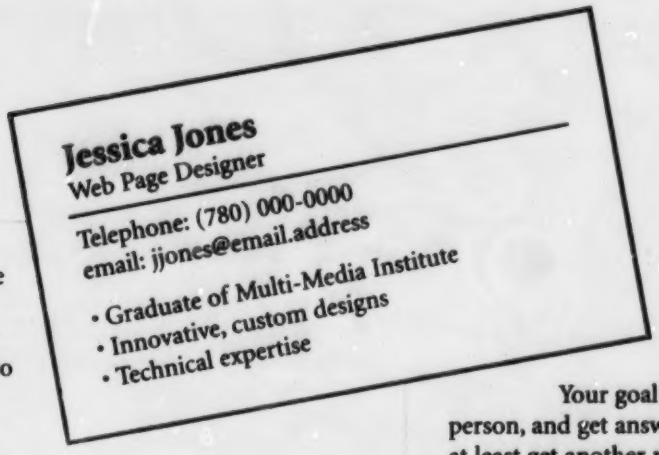
you can also include your occupation or field of work under your name and up to three bullets that highlight your best qualifications.



Here's an example.

How should you contact people?

Talk to the people you meet in the course of your daily routine about your job search. Telephone or arrange to meet people you have met before. Depending on how confident you feel and how much time you have, you may arrange to be introduced to the people you are referred to, or you can call them yourself.

Being assertive means expressing yourself in a straightforward way that shows self-respect and respect for others

What should you say when you contact people?

When you are talking to people you know personally:

- Tell them about your work search plan and describe the types of work you are looking for.
- Tell them how your training and experience relate to the type of work you want. If appropriate, offer to give them a copy of your résumé.
- Ask if they are aware of suitable employment opportunities.
- Ask them to refer you to others who might know about work opportunities.
- Ask if they would be willing to introduce you to these people, or ask for permission to mention their name when you contact the people they refer you to. Strangers will probably be more helpful if you start out by saying that someone you both know suggested you call.

When you are telephoning people you have never met, plan your call so you will be as brief and to the point as possible. Your goal is to set up a meeting with the person, and get answers to some of your questions (or at least get another referral).

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Explain who referred you, if appropriate, and why you are calling. (Remember, you are looking for information, not asking for a job.)
3. Ask for a short meeting or, if appropriate, ask your questions.

When people agree to meet with you, arrange a time and place that is convenient *for them.* If people refuse your request, politely ask if there is someone else you should talk to. Be assertive, not aggressive.

Sometimes, the people you call may be willing to answer a few questions on the phone, but not meet with you in person. Briefly describe your background and work search targets, and ask if the person knows any employers looking for someone like you. If you do get a job lead, ask for the name and position title of the person you should contact about it.

Remember, your purpose in networking is to meet people who can give you valuable advice and information. Some of the people you meet may be employers. Interview them in the same way you would interview anyone else. If they have a job opening and you make a favourable impression, they may decide to turn your information interview into a job interview. If they don't have any openings and you make a favourable impression, they may tell you about suitable opportunities with other employers and/or keep you in mind for future job openings.

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What should you ask when you meet with people?

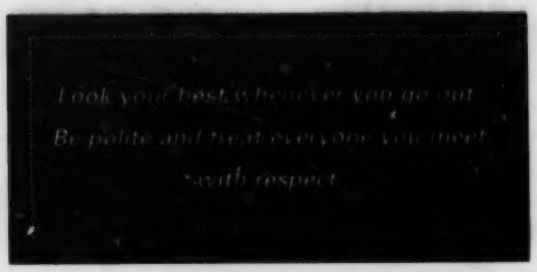
Before you meet with anyone, do some library or Internet research. Then you will be better prepared to get the most out of your information interviews.

Prepare for each interview by listing the questions you want to ask. The more you learn about work in your fields of interest, the more specific your questions will become.

Most people will have a limited amount of time to talk with you. Plan to ask your most important questions first, and make your questions as brief as possible. Be business-like and don't take more than 15 to 20 minutes of a stranger's time.

In general, ask:

- How people found work in their employment field. People love to talk about themselves, so this is usually a good conversation opener. However, don't spend too much time on this or you won't have time to ask other questions.
- How people are usually recruited and the work search methods that work best. For example, should you contact employers directly by dropping in, phoning, sending an email message, or writing a letter?
- About key issues and challenges. What is most rewarding/challenging about their employment field? What are the current "hot topics" in their field?
- Where a person with your background and skills might fit in. When appropriate, ask for details about the types of work mentioned.
- If there is someone else the person would recommend you talk to.



Take notes. When you have conducted a number of information interviews, it is hard to remember specifics like names and telephone numbers. During or immediately after each interview, write down the following information:

- name of the person you talked to
- date
- what you learned from the person
- the names and telephone numbers of any referrals.

Within a day or two, write a brief note thanking the person for his or her time and help.

Follow up each information interview by phoning two to three weeks later. A contact may have heard about work opportunities in the meantime, or thought of something else that might help you.

Contacting Employers Directly

There are five basic steps involved in contacting employers directly.

1. Identify potential employers.
2. Choose appropriate ways to contact them.
3. Identify the specific person you should contact.
4. Make contact.
5. Follow up.

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Contacting employers to get a job interview is not the same thing as information interviewing. This time, your objective is to convince employers that they should hire you.

1. Identify potential employers

The Yellow Pages list local employers, but there are other resources that may contain more information about them. For example, most medium-size and large employers have websites that describe their products and services. These websites may also include information about company structure and hiring practices.

Business directories provide overviews of company activities as well as addresses and phone numbers. Regional and national directories may be available in the reference section of your local library, Labour Market Information Centre (located in Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres), or provincial economic development office.

If you are interested in working in the public sector, detailed directories may be available for different levels of government in your area.

2. Choose appropriate ways to contact employers

You can contact employers in person, over the phone, by mail or email. There are several factors to consider when you are deciding which method(s) to use:

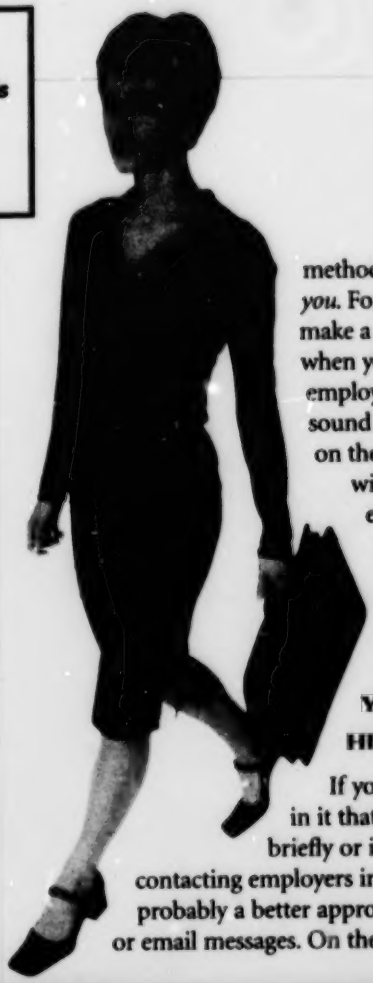
THE TYPE OF WORK YOU WANT

Employers use different hiring practices for different types of work. For example, they may use employment/placement agencies or campus placement offices to fill some positions, but not others.

To find work as quickly as possible, you need to know how most employers hire people for the type of work you want. You can find out by reading about the occupation and industry, and by information interviewing.

YOUR PERSONALITY AND SKILLS

If any method of contacting employers is generally acceptable for the type of work you want, choose the methods that will work best *for you*. For example, if you usually make a good first impression when you meet people, contact employers in person. If you sound pleasant and confident on the telephone (or could with practice), phone employers. If you can write a dynamite business letter or email message, contact employers in writing.



YOUR WORK HISTORY

If your work history has gaps in it that are difficult to explain briefly or in a positive way, contacting employers in person or by phone is probably a better approach than sending letters or email messages. On the other hand, if your qualifications look really good on paper, a well-written cover letter and résumé (or email message) may get better results.

Tailor your work search plan to fit your particular circumstances. The better the fit, the more likely you are to find suitable employment.

YOUR PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If you are applying for work in a community some distance away from where you live, you may not be able to drop in on employers or make lots of telephone calls. You may have to rely primarily on a "letter campaign" or email.

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Method of Contacting Employers – Advantages and Disadvantages

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
in person	• most effective for unskilled, some semi-skilled and some sales-related work • impresses employers who are looking for outgoing people • favourable first impressions can be created by your appearance and manner, regardless of your qualifications	• requires self-confidence • time-consuming • may require spending money on transportation • some employers might resent people walking in and taking up their time
by phone	• can contact many employers in a short time • harder to ignore than a letter • can be effective for most types of work	• requires good telephone skills • you have less than a minute to convince an employer to talk to you
by mail	• emphasizes good qualifications • may be the most practical method if you are currently employed	• not many employers will respond (five to ten per cent) • not as effective in competitive fields • time-consuming • waste of time if not well written • cost of supplies and postage
by email	• demonstrates your computer skills • faster and doesn't cost as much as mail or long distance calls	• requires a personal email address • waste of time if not well written • requires reformatting your résumé

3. Identify the person to contact

"Dear Sir/Madam" and "To whom it may concern" types of approaches are not very effective. No matter what method of contact you use, address a specific person.

- If you are contacting employers in person, call ahead of your visit and ask who has hiring authority for the type of work you want. Find out when this person may be available to speak to applicants. When you walk in, ask for the person by name.

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- If you are contacting employers by phone, ask the person who answers the phone for the name of the person who has hiring authority. Then, if that person is reluctant to put your call through to the appropriate person, call back another day and ask for the hiring authority by name.
- If you are contacting employers by letter or email, it is absolutely essential to address your messages to specific people. You may be able to find the names and addresses of company executives by checking company websites or local business directories, or by networking (if calling the organization is not practical).

If the thought of contacting employers directly scares you, ask yourself, "What is the worst/best that could happen?" If an employer does not have a current opening, you are no worse off than you would be if you had not asked. If the employer does have a job opening, you have a lead you might not have found any other way.

Record names and contact information in an organized way that gives you room for notes about when you contacted people and how they responded. You will need this information to follow up later.

4. Make contact

Visit, phone, send letters and emails. The more experienced you become at contacting employers, the easier it gets. (Yes, really!)

If you are not comfortable meeting employers or talking to them on the phone, practice ahead of time. Write a short script that takes less than one minute to say and sounds upbeat. State your name, describe your background and the type of position you are looking for, and ask for a job interview.

If you still feel uncomfortable, try role-playing your script with a friend. Then contact the employers that interest you the least. That way, you'll be more experienced and confident by the time you get to more interesting employers.

Your request for a job interview will be turned down many times. But, if you persist, you will get a number of interviews this way. Don't give up! Keep refining your script, and contacting more employers.

Don't overlook organizations with fewer than 20 employees. Small businesses create more new jobs than large businesses. Another advantage in contacting small businesses is that it may be easier to get through to the person who has hiring authority. In fact, it may be the boss who answers the phone.

5. Follow up

Follow up your contact with an employer after a reasonable length of time (about two weeks). Be *gently* persistent.

If you meet employers in person and they have no openings, leave a résumé or your business card anyway. Ask if and when it would be appropriate to check in with them again.

On the phone, your objective is to get a job interview. After a meeting, leave a résumé (if appropriate) and ask if it would be acceptable to call back in a couple of weeks.

When you contact employers by mail or email, ask for an interview in your closing paragraph. If possible, give a date and time when you will phone to arrange a convenient time. Then be sure to call when you said you would!

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Your Personal Work Search Plan

Most work opportunities are not advertised, so your job search plan should include networking and some type of direct contact with employers. Your choice of other work search methods should be based on your knowledge of how most employers hire people for the type of work you want.

Which work search methods will you use?

Check off the methods that will be the most effective for you.

- ❑ Networking and information interviewing.
- ❑ Contacting employers in person.
- ❑ Contacting employers by telephone.
- ❑ Contacting employers by mail.
- ❑ Contacting employers by email.
- ❑ Answering job ads in the newspaper and/or on the Internet.
- ❑ Using the services of the placement office at a post-secondary institution you have attended.
- ❑ Joining a "job club" or some other support network for job seekers.
- ❑ Registering with employment/placement agencies.
- ❑ Registering with electronic job matching services, such as the Electronic Labour Exchange (www.ele-spe.org).
- ❑ Frequently checking job postings on Canada-Alberta JOBS kiosks or on the Internet (www.jobbank.gc.ca).
- ❑ Using creative methods of attracting attention such as sending telegrams or designing your résumé to look like a brochure.

Other method(s) listed below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Which work search method will you spend most time on? Put a #1 beside that method.

Which one is next important? Put a #2 next to it.

Assign a priority to each of the methods you have chosen.

The amount of time you spend on work search activities should reflect your priorities. For example, if networking is your #1 method, then most of your job search day should be spent networking.

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MARKETING YOUR SKILLS

Marketing your skills is much the same as marketing any other type of product. You have to:

- be familiar with your product (your skills – see Chapter 1)
- identify potential buyers (employers – see Chapter 2)
- present your skills in a way that will attract attention and make a good impression.

Portfolios, résumés, cover letters, email messages, application forms and interviews are marketing tools. They should present the benefits that hiring you would bring to an employer.

A skill is a learned ability to do something well. Communicating effectively is a skill, just as operating a piece of equipment is a skill.

Both content and "packaging" are important. If your résumé, cover letter and email look well-organized and interesting, employers will probably start to read them. Quality content is required to keep their attention.

Your marketing tools should reflect both the type of work you are applying for and your personality. If you are applying for work in a conservative industry like banking, your application should follow all the standard guidelines for application forms, cover letters and résumés. However, if you are applying for work in a creative industry like advertising, your marketing tools will be more effective if their formats demonstrate your creative abilities.

A résumé you write yourself is bound to reflect your personality better than a résumé written for you by a friend or résumé service. Most employers see a lot of standard-looking résumés. If you can create a unique style that is informative, interesting and draws attention to your strongest skills, your résumé will certainly stand out.

As your work search progresses, keep improving your tools. Take note of what seems to impress employers and what does not, and use this knowledge to refine your marketing strategies.

Portfolios

For years, people in creative occupations have used portfolios to show the quality of their work. Employers have come to expect photographers, graphic artists, writers, crafters, broadcasters and others in creative fields to submit copies of their best work when they apply for work.

A portfolio is a collection of items that shows what you have done.

People in other types of occupations are beginning to discover the advantages of having a portfolio too. For example, teachers might show prospective employers copies of items that illustrate their teaching style, philosophy and ability (e.g. photographs of creative classroom displays or students working on an innovative project, sample lesson plans, practicum evaluations, and/or letters from supervising teachers, students and parents). Applicants who bring portfolios of such items to interviews are often much more impressive than applicants who do not.

Creating a portfolio will help you market your skills by:

- reminding you of things you have done well
- providing evidence of your skills
- helping you write a much more effective résumé
- helping you prepare for job interviews.

You can also use your portfolio for

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

If your portfolio does not include evidence that you have *all* of the skills employers in your field are looking for (e.g. communication skills, computer skills,

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No matter what type of work you are looking for, creating a portfolio can give you a competitive edge.

teamwork skills), look for ways to develop and/or demonstrate the skills that are missing.

PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

Post-secondary institutions sometimes admit applicants who do not meet standard admission requirements (e.g. the applicant does not have a required credential). When appropriate, institutions conduct prior learning assessments to evaluate applicants' abilities to succeed in a program. If your portfolio includes evidence that you have succeeded in similar learning situations, it can be a great asset.

SCHOLARSHIP, AWARD AND CERTIFICATION/LICENSING APPLICATIONS

When you are applying for certification, licensing, scholarships or other awards, use your portfolio in much the same you would when applying for work.

You probably already have the beginnings of a portfolio in a folder or shoebox somewhere. If you don't, it is never too late to start. Here's how.

Go through your papers, photographs, closets, etc.

Gather together evidence of everything you have done on the job, at school and during your leisure time that required work-related skills (see Chapter 1). Your collection might include:

- projects you completed on your own or with others (e.g. school assignments, work reports, volunteer activities)
- photographs or models of project activities
- documents from previous jobs (e.g. records of employment, job performance evaluations, letters of recommendation, letters of reference)
- thank-you cards from people who appreciated something you did
- items that show the results you have achieved or the quality of your work (e.g. certificates, awards, award nomination papers, safety records, sales figures, marketing plans, technical drawings)
- copies of computer documents or programs you have developed
- posters or brochures about events you have worked on
- newspaper or magazine articles about you or quoting you, or about projects you have been involved with.

The possibilities are endless. The important thing is to start collecting, keep these items together, and add to your collection as you acquire more experience. Over time, it is easy to forget some of the things you have done, especially if you work many temporary assignments or on contract.

Organize your collection

Organizing your collection makes selecting appropriate items much easier when you are contacting employers in person and getting ready for job interviews.

The best way to organize your collection depends on your skills and the types of items you have gathered. Use whatever methods and categories make sense to you.

- If most of your items are paper-based (e.g. letters, photographs), you can organize them in a three-ring binder with dividers to separate evidence of different types of skills or work. Or, you can copy, enlarge, shrink and laminate documents and photographs, and put them in a scrapbook.
- If you are looking for computer-related work, scan documents and create an electronic portfolio.

Be creative in the way you display, organize and store your collection. But make sure you can easily take your portfolio apart to add new items or take things out to show employers.

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Employers want to know if you are honest, positive, responsible, adaptable, willing to learn, safety conscious, and can work productively in a team environment.

Decide what to show to which employers

When you are getting ready to approach an employer in person or go to a scheduled interview, try to figure out which skills will interest the employer most. Then select items from your portfolio that show you have those skills. If you have any education documents (certificates, diplomas, degrees) that relate to job requirements, put them at the front.

For example, if you know the work you are applying for involves creating professional-looking documents, take along a copy of a report you produced by inserting graphics or charts in a word-processed document. It doesn't matter if you created the report at work, for a school assignment or as a volunteer activity – it is concrete evidence of your ability to use a word processing program effectively.

People are more likely to remember what they have seen and heard, than what they have only heard.

Effective résumés take time to develop . . . but get results.

Quality is important! The whole point is to impress employers with the quality of your work, your organizational skills and your presentation. If you don't have time to do a good job, leave your portfolio at home. Even when you are sure you have done a good job, ask someone else to review it and proof read documents for mistakes.

How to use your portfolio

Review your portfolio before meeting with an employer. It will remind you of stories you can tell that illustrate your skills.

Employers may not want to look through your whole portfolio, but they will be impressed with the quality of the samples you select and the time, energy and skill that went into creating your portfolio.

Here are some tips about using your portfolio in an interview.

- Present only samples that are relevant to the questions employers ask.
- Don't just read the material. Talk about what you did.
- Practice your stories before you go. Friends and relatives can provide useful feedback.
- Never complain about problems you had with a project. Talk about how you solved problems and worked with others.
- Take copies of items to interviews, not originals. If employers don't have time to look through your portfolio while you are there, offer to leave it for them to look at later.

Résumés

Most employers will expect you to have a résumé (a one-page or two-page summary of your qualifications). Some employers may ask you to fill out an application form as well. When that happens, all you have to do is copy information from your résumé on to the form.

The purpose of a résumé is to quickly draw an employer's attention to your most relevant skills and accomplishments. It is a marketing tool designed to get you invited for an interview. It should be short, interesting to look at and easy to read.

Many books have been written about how to write an effective résumé. Unfortunately, they don't always agree.

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- Some authors emphasize the need for a "job objective" statement near the beginning of a résumé. A job objective statement very briefly states the type of work you want and your strongest qualification(s) for that type of work. Other authors argue that you don't need to include a job objective statement, especially if your goal is obvious or can be stated in a cover letter.
- Some authors recommend listing your references and their contact information at the end of your résumé. Others suggest ending your résumé with a statement such as "References available upon request" or "References available from supervisors listed above." Still others suggest not mentioning references at all because employers generally assume that you will bring a list of references with you to an interview.

You have to decide what will market your skills most effectively for the type of work you want. If you are not sure, write a draft résumé. Then show it to people who work in your target industry, and an employment counsellor or two. Ask them to suggest improvements and accept their comments without argument. Chances are, you will get a variety of opinions. Do what you think will work best.

Despite varied opinions about some aspects of résumé writing, most experts agree on the following steps.

1. Gather together information about your skills, work history and education/training.
2. Decide what information to include in your résumé.
3. Choose a format or combination of formats.
4. Write a draft.
5. Get feedback on your draft and keep editing it until it is as impressive as you can make it.
6. Tailor your résumé to fit the needs of specific work opportunities.
7. Choose the most effective method(s) of delivering your résumé.

References

Most employers check references, so make sure your references are able to speak clearly and enthusiastically about you.

Always ask your references for permission to use their names, and ask if they feel comfortable about recommending your work. If they don't, they won't give you a strong recommendation.

Give your references a copy of your résumé and point out how your qualifications relate to your work search targets. Tell them about the type of work you will be applying for and the skills you want to emphasize. The better informed your references are, the better prepared they will be when employers call them.

If you decide not to list your references on your résumé, list them on a separate sheet of paper and take it with you when you meet employers. Remember to put your own name somewhere on your list of references, in case it gets separated from your résumé.

1. Gather information together

The first step is to gather facts about your employment and education history, and do some work on identifying your skills and accomplishments. If you have already completed the exercises in Chapter 1, or collected items together for a portfolio, you are well on your way.

Create a "fact sheet" by listing the following information.

- work history including dates of employment, job titles and descriptions, names, addresses and telephone numbers of former employers, names of supervisors, your skills and situations in which you have demonstrated those skills.
- education/training history including names and addresses of education/training institutions, programs completed, dates, major areas of study or training, and any awards or recognitions you received.
- volunteer experience, hobbies, other activities and memberships that show you have knowledge or experience related to the type of work you want, or

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show you have positive characteristics (e.g. you are honest, positive, responsible, adaptable, willing to learn, safety-conscious)

- the names, addresses and telephone numbers of your references, preferably people who have supervised your activities in the past; on the job, at school or for volunteer activities. Make sure their contact information is up to date!

2. Decide what to include

The second step is to sort through the facts you have gathered and compare your qualifications to the requirements of the work you want. Decide which are your strongest qualifications and list them near the beginning of your résumé, so employers see them first.

- If you have lots of work experience that is related to the type of work you are applying for, information about your work history should appear before your education/training history.
- If you have more related education than work experience, information about your education/training should be near the beginning.
- If you have strong qualifications in several categories, briefly list them in a "Qualifications Summary" section at the beginning and provide more information later in your résumé.

The first thing employers want to know is whether or not you have the required qualifications. If you do, the next thing they want to know is how well you would "fit" in their work environment. You never know what clues will indicate to a particular employer that you would fit in. So, if you have room (your résumé should be one page if you don't have much education or experience; two, at most, if you do), include some information about your interests and leisure activities.

3. Choose a format or combination of formats

The third step is to decide how to organize and present your information. Different résumé formats are appropriate in different circumstances.

Chronological résumés

If you have had a series of work assignments with increasing levels of responsibility *and* your experience is directly related to your work search target, use a chronological format. In other words, list your work and education/training history in chronological order from most recent to least recent.

Chronological résumés highlight a steady employment record and emphasize career growth and development. Employers are most familiar with this format, and a chronological résumé is easier to write than other types of résumés.

Functional résumés

If you don't have directly related work experience, or have changed jobs frequently or been unemployed for long periods of time, you can use a functional résumé format to minimize these drawbacks. Organize information about things you have done (on the job, at school, as a volunteer) in skill categories that are directly related to the requirements of the work you want.

Functional résumés highlight skills, not work history, but generally are not recommended. Many employers view functional résumés with suspicion because they do not include specific "where and when" information.

Combination résumés

If you want to highlight your skills but do not want to take the risk of making employers suspicious, use a combination résumé. Organize information about things you have done in skill categories and briefly outline your work history near the end of your résumé.

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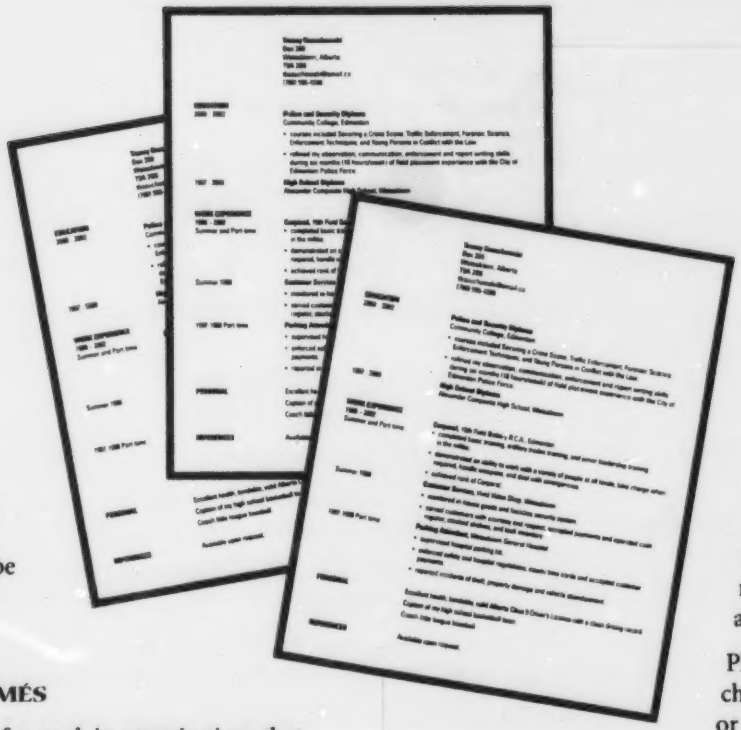

Combination résumés draw attention to what you can do, and provide "where and when" information as well. They minimize drawbacks such as gaps in employment and lack of directly related experience, but must be well written to be effective.

Scannable résumés

If you will be applying for work in organizations that probably receive hundreds of résumés each year, use a scannable résumé format. More and more organizations are using electronic résumé tracking systems to select résumés for consideration. Managers list keywords related to the skills and knowledge required for the position, and a computer selects résumés that contain those keywords.

Scannable résumés are chronological, functional or combination résumés that increase the chances of your résumé being electronically selected. They may or may not include a keyword list near the beginning or end of the résumé. Keywords are nouns that are not the same, but mean the same thing, as words used in other parts of the résumé. For example, if you want to become a salesperson, your keyword list should include "salesperson" (if that word is not already used in a job objective statement or former job title) as well as synonyms such as "sales associate", "sales representative" and "marketer". Then, your résumé will pop up whenever employers search for résumés containing any of those words.

Plain text résumés

When you submit your résumé by email, create a plain text version of your résumé and include it in the body of your message. The employer may not be able to open a formatted résumé if you send it as an attachment.

Plain text résumés are chronological, functional or combination résumés that have little or no formatting. They are not as interesting to look at, but can be sent to employers very quickly and inexpensively.

Illustrations of résumé formats

In the following illustrations, some items are optional. You can choose to include them or not, depending on your particular circumstances. For example, list job titles if they tell readers that your experience is directly related to your work search targets. If they don't highlight the skills you want to emphasize, leave them out.

Likewise, if employers may not be familiar with the location of your previous employers, include the name of the community and province. If they are probably familiar with the employers on your list, you can leave addresses out.

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Illustration of SCANNABLE CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

Your Full Name
Your Street Address or Box Number
Community, Province
Postal Code
Email address
(Area code) Telephone number

Objective:

Describe the type of work you are seeking and your most relevant qualifications (optional section).

Experience:

20XX – 20XX

Position Title (optional)
Company Name of Your Most Recent Employer
Name of Community, Province (optional)

- what you did in this job that required skills similar to those needed for the type of work you are applying for.
- your accomplishments (e.g. consistently met or exceeded sales targets or service standards; received good feedback from clients or customers).
- start each item with active words. For example, "participated in establishing..." instead of "responsible for helping to set up..."

19XX – 20XX

Position Title (optional)
Company Name of Your Second-Last Employer
Name of Community, Province (optional)

- use expressive nouns to describe responsibilities, duties and accomplishments that are relevant to your objective.
- list other duties and responsibilities very briefly.

19XX- 19XX

Position Title (optional)
Company Name of Your Third-Last Employer
Community, Province (optional)

- skills, duties, responsibilities and accomplishments.
- shorter descriptions of experience that is less relevant to your objective.

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Education:

19XX- 19XX

Name of Educational Institution
Community, Province (optional)
Diploma, certificate or degree earned; major and minor fields of study or training.

Summer 19XX

Also list short education, training and professional development courses that relate to the type of work you are applying for.

Activities

Skills

Interests

Community Involvement

Choose a title for this section that reflects the additional information you want to include. This section could include:

- volunteer experience and hobbies, particularly those that relate to the type of work you are applying for.
- recognitions or awards you have received that provide evidence of strong personal skills and/or good citizenship.
- interests you have in common with many people in the type of work you are applying for.
- skills not already mentioned that relate to the job (for example, your ability to communicate in a second language).
- memberships in professional organizations.

If this information includes some of your strongest qualifications for the position, call this section "Skills" or "Highlights of Qualifications" or something else appropriate and put it at the beginning of your résumé.

Keywords List

List alternate names and abbreviations for position titles, education programs, tools, skills and other key information that employers might scan for and you have not used elsewhere in your résumé. Use commas or periods to separate words and phrases.

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Illustration of a Scannable COMBINATION Résumé

YOUR NAME
Street Address or Box Number
Community, Province, Postal Code
Email Address
(Area Code) Telephone Number(s)

OBJECTIVE

Describe the type of work you are seeking and your most relevant qualification (optional section).

EXPERIENCE

Skill Title

Group your skills under two or three (no more than five) skill titles (e.g. Customer Service, Community Relations, Project Management).

The skill titles you use should reflect the types of skills required for your objective.

Skill Title

Concisely describe how you have demonstrated each type of skill and where.

Under Organizational Skills, for example, say what you have organized and how, and the results you have achieved.

Use expressive words and nouns that employers will probably use to scan and select appropriate résumés.

Skill Title

Avoid self-evaluations. For example, under "Customer Service Skills" replace "provided excellent service" with "improved customer satisfaction ratings." Even better, state how much customer satisfaction ratings improved, or any recognitions you received (e.g. employee of the week).

WORK HISTORY

Position title (or a phrase describing the type of work you did), name of employer, address (optional), and dates of employment.

List the name of your employer first if it is more impressive than your position title.

Or, put the dates of employment in the left margin as you would in a chronological résumé.

EDUCATION

List your high school or post-secondary education, the names and locations of the institutions you attended, and the dates you attended.

Highlight diplomas, licences, etc. and any awards or recognitions.

Include other relevant training (e.g. seminars, short courses, training for volunteer work).

INTERESTS/ACTIVITIES/MEMBERSHIPS

The title of this section should fit your circumstances. Include information that gives the reader an idea of your personal strengths and involvements.

If you are applying for work that has physical requirements, include information such as "excellent health" under the title "Personal" or "Personal Data."

Or, you can leave this section out altogether.

KEYWORDS

List alternate names and abbreviations for position titles, education programs, tools, skills and other key information that employers might scan for and you have not used elsewhere in your résumé. Use punctuation to separate words and phrases.

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ILLUSTRATION OF A PLAIN TEXT RÉSUMÉ

YOUR NAME

Street Address or Box Number

Community, Province, Postal Code

(Area Code) Telephone Number(s)

Email Address

OBJECTIVE:

Create a plain text résumé by saving a copy of your chronological or combination résumé as a text (.txt) file. This will remove any formatting (e.g. bold, font sizes, bullets, indenting) you have used to make your résumé look professional.

EDUCATION:

* Highlight and separate titles and subtitles by using the Enter key and Space Bar to create white space. Do not use the Tab key.

* Start each new item in a list with an asterisk (*),hyphen (-) or plus sign (+).

* If you have a choice of fonts, choose a fixed-width font such as this one (Courier) so your résumé will scan better.

EXPERIENCE:

* Make sure each line is less than 65 characters long and ends with a hard return (use "Enter").

* If you allow lines to wrap the way they do automatically in your email program, employers' systems will wrap them differently, often with unattractive results.

* Check to see how your email will look on other systems by copying your plain text résumé into the body of an email message, and sending it to several friends. Ask your friends to send the message back to you so you can see how their systems display it.

KEYWORDS:

Employers who ask applicants to apply by email may use electronic résumé tracking systems, so make sure you include as many relevant keywords as you can.

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4. Write a draft

The fourth step is to write a draft (or two if you are not sure which format will work better for you).

- Keep it simple and clear – two pages at most.
- List a telephone number where you can be reached during the day. Or, list two telephone numbers, one where messages can be left during the day and an evening number.
- Emphasize your accomplishments and achievements. Wherever possible, describe how your work helped employers solve problems and achieve their goals.
- Use active, expressive words to describe what you have done. You can use a thesaurus to find descriptive words, or check out books that have lots of sample résumés at your local library or bookstore. Don't use "I" and inexpressive words such as "I was responsible for..." or "My duties involved..."
- Be honest. Don't exaggerate or misrepresent yourself – most employers check. On the other hand, don't sell yourself short by being humble.
- Use good quality, white or off-white, 8 1/2" x 11" paper and a laser printer that produces clean, clear copy. Add to the professional look of your résumé by using wide margins and using point form to create lots of "white space" on the page. Use bold to highlight information.
- Make sure there are no errors in spelling, grammar or typing. Check and double-check!
- Don't sign or date your résumé, put the title "résumé" at the top, attach a photograph of yourself, or include personal information such as age, sex, height, weight or ethnic background.

If your résumé should be scannable, follow these guidelines as well.

- Use a standard font type (letters should not touch one another, so a fixed-width or **sans serif** font is safest) and font size (anywhere from 11 point to 14 point size). Don't use italics or underline text.
- Use a simple layout – no columns, lines (vertical or horizontal), or graphic elements such as boxes or shading.
- Put only your name on the first line, and use a standard address format on the next line.
- State your qualifications in as many different ways as you can.
- Use lots of descriptive nouns (name your field of work, your strongest skills, the types of equipment and computer programs you know how to use). You can use industry jargon and abbreviations *if* you are sure everyone reading your résumé will understand them (including Human Resources people who do not have a technical background). If you use abbreviations, write the words out at least once, preferably near the beginning of your résumé.
- If you have not used all of the keywords and abbreviations that might be used to describe your field and skills, list the ones you have not used in a "Keyword Summary" section near the beginning or end of your résumé.

Check out the résumés on the following pages to see how Tracey, Brad and Ann have written their scannable chronological and combination résumés. Then develop your own style and content – your résumé won't attract much attention if it looks exactly the same as a lot of other people's résumés!

5. Keep rewriting your résumé

The fifth step is to get some feedback on your draft(s), and edit until your skills are presented as concisely and impressively as possible. This is much easier if you use a computer to create and edit your draft. Keep a copy on a disk so you can edit and revise your résumé as necessary in the future.

Before you start sending your résumé to employers, ask as many people as possible to give you feedback on your most recent draft(s). You need to find out if your résumé gives a clear and appealing picture of your best qualifications.

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Keep copies of your résumé drafts for future reference.

When you have found work, update your portfolio and resume regularly

After you have started using your résumé, review it from time to time. Keep refining it as your work search progresses and you learn more about employers' needs and expectations.

After completing each draft, ask yourself (and others) the following questions.

- Is it attractive and easy to read?
- Do key points and headings stand out?
- Is it concise (no unnecessary words or sentences)?
- Is all the information relevant and positive?
- Does every statement emphasize a skill or ability?
- Are there any errors in spelling or grammar?

Show employers your résumé only when you can confidently answer "Yes" to all of these questions.

6. Tailor your résumé

If you are applying for different types of work, you will probably need more than one version of your résumé. For example, for work requiring specific credentials, the "Education" section should be near the beginning of your résumé. For other types of work, it may be to your advantage to highlight other qualifications by putting them first.

Every time you apply for work, analyze the job requirements before you submit a résumé. If necessary, re-organize or rewrite your résumé in a way that clearly shows you can satisfy job requirements.

7. Deliver your résumé

The last step is to get your résumé and cover letter to employers. You have several options:

- deliver your résumé in person
- mail it
- fax it
- email it.

However you choose to deliver your résumé, it is a good idea to follow up to make sure it has been received. For example, send a clean paper copy by regular mail if you have faxed or emailed your résumé. It doesn't hurt for employers to see your résumé more than once, and a paper copy will make better photocopies for a review panel.

Cover Letters

A cover letter is a business-like way to introduce your résumé or application form. It creates an important first impression of your qualifications. Some employers automatically discard any applications they receive that do not include a cover letter.

To be most effective, your letter must:

- get the employer's attention by appealing to the employer's interests and needs
- highlight your skills and accomplishments
- provide information that is relevant to the particular job you are applying for
- convince the employer to read your résumé or application form.

Checklist for writing a cover letter

- ❑ Make it brief and to the point. Your letter should be short, and typewritten on good quality paper - a standard business-style letter. Use simple and direct language.
- ❑ Link yourself to the employer by naming your referral if possible (for example, Joe Davis, your Manager of Customer Service, suggested I write to you). If you are responding to a newspaper advertisement, refer to the ad. Show your awareness of the types of things the company is doing and its objectives.
- ❑ "Personalize" your letter. It should reflect your personality. However, be careful to avoid appearing pushy, overbearing or too familiar. This is a business letter so humour is generally out of place here.

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Illustration of a Cover Letter

Return Address
Community, Province
Postal Code

Date

Employer's Name
Position Title
Company Name
Street Address or Box Number
Community, Province
Postal Code

Dear Mr./Ms.: (address a specific person, not Sir/Madam)

Tell the reader that you are interested in this job and why. Let the reader know that you are familiar with the organization and its operations, but get right to the point. If appropriate, state how you heard about the work opportunity.

Explain why you are applying for this position or type of work. Point out any key experience (including volunteer or school experience) that qualifies you for the position. Keep your paragraphs short.

Describe any other important work history. State that a résumé or application is enclosed for more information. Offer to provide additional information, if needed.

Request an interview. If appropriate, let the reader know you will be checking back to set up an appointment.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Encl.

- ❑ Tailor your letter to the requirements of the job. It must show how your skills relate to this particular employer's needs. Photocopies and "form" letters are not acceptable.
- ❑ Stress how the employer will benefit from hiring you, and how you think you will benefit by becoming a part of the company. It is important to anticipate the reader's questions and provide answers. Make it easy to see where you would fit in.
- ❑ Mention that you are available at the employer's convenience for an interview or to discuss opportunities, and give a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.
- ❑ Check the letter carefully for any spelling, punctuation, grammar, or typing errors. Ask a friend to check it too if you are not sure.

Examples: Tracey, Brad and Ann

Tracey, Brad and Ann represent three job search situations.

- Tracey is a recent post-secondary graduate looking for work in her field.
- Brad is unemployed and looking for an apprenticeship position.
- Ann's family circumstances have changed and she needs to earn more money than she has in the past.

Tracey

Tracey is 20 years old, single and a recent graduate of a two-year Police and Security program at a local college. She would like to become a police officer in the RCMP or in a municipal police department in Alberta. However, Tracey realizes that there are a limited number of places to apply and that she may not get a job immediately. Therefore, she has decided to apply for "loss prevention" (security) positions with major retailers as well.

To begin preparing résumés for her two job objectives, Tracey analyzed the skills she has developed through her training and previous work experience. Following is a breakdown of the skills and knowledge Tracey had to use in two of her past activities.

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Corporal in the Militia

Activities	Skills and Knowledge
Basic Training	working as part of a team tolerating discomfort physically fit disciplined responsible self-reliant
Artillery Trades Training	operating computerized equipment acting quickly and decisively handling weapons safely administering first aid observing closely following procedures calculating tolerating discomfort working under pressure accepting feedback and learning from mistakes demonstrating self-control using caution being precise taking risks remaining alert taking pride in performance
Leadership Training	making decisions directing/supervising confronting (when appropriate) organizing explaining teaching/training speaking in public confident

Police and Security Program

Activities	Skills and Knowledge
Subjects Covered in the Program	securing a crime scene gathering evidence conducting security surveys enforcing traffic laws dealing with young offenders dealing with the mentally challenged federal and provincial statutes forensic science enforcement techniques police administration computers physical fitness
Field Placement Experience	observing enforcement and court procedures and techniques establishing good working relationships writing reports

Tracey has decided to use a chronological résumé when applying for police officer positions. She has not included a job objective statement in this résumé because her cover letter clearly states her objective.

Tracey chose to major in police work, not security, so she will use a combination résumé to apply for loss prevention positions. In this résumé, she includes a job objective statement and highlights her security-related experience.

The sample cover letter is one she used when contacting an employer directly to find work opportunities in the loss prevention field.

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Tracey's CHRONOLOGICAL Resume

Tracey Kozuchowski
Box 359
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
T9A 2G6
tkozuchowski@email.ca
(780) 555-4266

EDUCATION

2000 - 2002

Police and Security Diploma
Community College, Edmonton

- courses included Securing a Crime Scene, Traffic Enforcement, Forensic Science, Enforcement Techniques, and Young Persons in Conflict with the Law.
- refined my observation, communication, enforcement and report writing skills during six months (16 hours/week) of field placement experience with the City of Edmonton Police Force.

1997 - 2000

High School Diploma
Alexander Composite High School, Wetaskiwin

WORK EXPERIENCE

1999 – 2002
Summer and Part-time

Corporal, 15th Field Battery R.C.A., Edmonton

- completed basic training, artillery trades training, and junior leadership training in the militia.
- demonstrated an ability to work with a variety of people at all levels, take charge when required, handle weapons, and deal with emergencies.
- achieved rank of Corporal.

Summer 1998

Customer Service, Vivid Video Shop, Wetaskiwin

- monitored in-house goods and facilities security system.
- served customers with courtesy and respect, accepted payments and operated cash register, stocked shelves, and took inventory.

1997-1998 Part-time

Parking Attendant, Wetaskiwin General Hospital

- supervised hospital parking lot.
- enforced safety and hospital regulations, issued time cards and accepted customer payments.
- reported incidents of theft, property damage and vehicle abandonment.

PERSONAL

Excellent health, bondable, valid Alberta Class 5 Driver's License with a clean driving record.

Captain of my high school basketball team.

Coach little league baseball.

REFERENCES

Available upon request.

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TRACEY'S COMBINATION RESUME

Tracey Kozuchowski
Box 359
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
T9A 2G6
tkozuchowski@email.ca
(780) 555-4266

OBJECTIVE

A loss prevention position related to my training in security and safety/first aid.

EDUCATION

Police and Security Diploma
Community College, 2002

- Courses included Security Survey, Security Emergency Planning, Computers, Young Persons in Conflict with the Law, and Securing Crime Scenes.
- Achieved an overall 3.1 grade point average (out of 4).

High School Diploma
Alexander Composite High School, Wetaskiwin, 1997

EXPERIENCE

Security

- Enforced safety and hospital regulations with tact and courtesy while employed as a parking lot attendant.
- Monitored in-house goods and facilities security system in a retail outlet.
- Learned self-defense and weapons handling techniques while in the militia.
- Observed law enforcement and courtroom activities of Edmonton police officers during six-month field placement (16 hours/week).

Safety and First Aid

- Followed safety procedures and administered first aid as required in the militia.
- Instructed artillerymen in weapons handling and safety procedures.
- Hold a valid Standard First Aid Certificate.

Working With People

- Commended by employer for serving customers well and maintaining productive work relationships while employed in a video store.
- Worked cooperatively with a variety of people, dealt with mock emergency situations, and assumed a leadership role as required while in the militia.
- Captain of my high school basketball team and coach for community league baseball.

Report Writing

- Used word processing software to write reports both in the militia and during field placement with the City of Edmonton Police Force.

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WORK HISTORY

Corporal, 15th Field Battery R.C.A., Edmonton, summer/part-time from 1999 to 2002

Customer Service, Vivid Video Shop, Wetaskiwin, summer 1998

Parking Attendant, Wetaskiwin General Hospital, summer 1997 and part-time 1997-98

PERSONAL INFORMATION

- Excellent health
- Bondable
- Valid Alberta Class 5 Driver's License with a clean driving record
- Captain of my high school basketball team
- Coach little league baseball

REFERENCES

Bryan Lee, Instructor
Police and Security Program
Community College
Edmonton, Alberta
T5P 2P7
(780) 555-1234

Ms. Mona Mottershead
Vivid Video Shop
509 Main Street
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
T9A 5X2
(780) 555-5283

Sgt. Gordon Kimball
15th Field Battery R.C.A.
Box 526
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 5Z4
(780) 555-1794

Mrs. E. Rudyk, Principal
Alexander Composite High School
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
T9A 7N3
(780) 555-5319

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Tracey Kozuchowski
Box 359
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
T9A 2G6
(780) 555-4266
tkozuchowski@email.ca

EDUCATION

2000 – 2002 **Police and Security Diploma**
Community College, Edmonton

- courses included Securing a Crime Scene, Traffic Enforcement, Forensic Science, Enforcement Techniques, and Young Persons in Conflict with the Law.
- refined my observation, communication, enforcement and report writing skills during six months (16 hours per week) of field placement experience with the City of Edmonton Police Force.
- achieved an overall 3.1 grade point average (out of 4).

1994 – 1997 **High School Diploma**
Alexander Composite High School, Wetaskiwin

WORK EXPERIENCE

1992 – 1995
Summer and Part-time **Corporal**, 15th Field Battery R.C.A., Edmonton

- completed basic training, artillery trades training, and junior leadership training in the militia.
- demonstrated an ability to work with a variety of people at all levels, take charge when required, handle weapons, and deal with emergencies.
- achieved rank of Corporal.

Summer 1991 **Customer Service**, Vivid Video Shop, Wetaskiwin

- monitored in-house goods and facilities security system.
- served customers with courtesy and respect, accepted payments and operated cash register, stocked shelves, and took inventory.

1990-1991
Part-time **Parking Attendant**, Wetaskiwin General Hospital

- supervised hospital parking lot.
- enforced safety and hospital regulations, issued time cards and accepted customer payments.
- reported incidents of theft, property damage and vehicle abandonment.

PERSONAL

Excellent health, bondable, valid Alberta Class 5 Driver's License with a clean driving record.

Captain of my high school basketball team.

Coach little league baseball.

KEYWORDS

Law enforcement, electronic security systems, surveillance, retail, military, self-defense, emergency procedures, crime prevention, conflict resolution, customer service, safety procedures, firearms, weapon handling, marksman, instructor, clean abstract, own vehicle, First Aid Certificate, leader, MS Word.

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TRACEY'S COVER LETTER

Box 359
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
T9A 2G6

June 28, 2002

Mr. William Dickson, Supervisor
Loss Prevention
Big B Department Store
Red Deer, Alberta
T4N 3K2

Dear Mr. Dickson:

As a recent graduate of the Police and Security Diploma program at a Community College in Edmonton, I was very interested in reading a recent article about your firm in the Enforcement newsletter. Your approach to loss prevention sounds both innovative and practical.

I am writing to ask for your advice and assistance in my search for a full-time position in the loss prevention field. If you are aware of positions that are currently available or may become available in the near future, I would certainly appreciate hearing about them. Central Alberta would be my preferred location, but I am willing to relocate anywhere in Alberta.

My training included an extensive field placement with the City of Edmonton Police Department. My work experience includes two and half years in the militia where I learned to work effectively with a variety of people, to defend myself, and to deal with emergency situations and administer first aid. I have enclosed my résumé to give you a more complete picture of my background.

I will be in Red Deer in two weeks time and will call you then. Any information you can provide about current or future job openings would be greatly appreciated!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracey Kozuchowski

Encl.

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Brad

Brad has had three unskilled and semi-skilled jobs since he graduated from high school. He enjoyed working as a construction labourer and has decided he wants to become a welder. That means he needs to convince a qualified employer to hire and train him as an apprentice.

Brad found a short description of what welders do and the Alberta apprenticeship requirements on the Internet (www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo). He has also talked to some welders at work. From this information, he has gathered that employers are looking for prospective apprentices who:

- are hard workers
- have a positive attitude
- are interested in welding and able to learn
- are safety-conscious
- have good eye-hand co-ordination and manual dexterity
- have good vision
- are able to concentrate on detailed work
- are patient
- work well with others
- are productive with little supervision
- have the strength required to work all day with heavy metal components
- are willing to work outdoors on construction sites or in oil fields.

Brad has all of these qualifications. His work experience is not directly related to welding, so he knows a chronological format probably won't be the best format for him. However, he has decided to start by organizing information about his work history in the form of a standard chronological résumé.

To develop a more impressive combination résumé, Brad asked himself the following questions.

- Which of the required qualifications have I demonstrated in my previous jobs?
- Where else have I demonstrated those qualities?
- What other employability skills do I have that employers might be looking for? (See Chapter 1)

Brad will be applying for work in companies of all sizes, so he chose to use a scannable combination format.

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BRAD'S CHRONOLOGICAL RÉSUMÉ

Bradley Roy
16532 – 101 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8V 4M7
(780) 555-8778

Objective:

Apprentice welder position.

Experience:

1999 – 2002

Labourer
M & M Construction, Grande Prairie

- loaded, unloaded and moved construction materials, tools and equipment.
- shovelled and raked earth to excavate and backfill.
- shovelled cement and other materials into cement mixers, and mixed, poured and spread concrete.
- assembled and dismantled scaffolding, ramps, catwalks, shoring and barricades.
- demolished buildings, sorted and removed debris, cleaned and piled salvaged materials.

Summer 1999

Landscaping Assistant
City Turf, Grande Prairie

- mowed, power-raked, edged and fertilized lawns
- laid sod and planted trees
- helped install brick patios, walkways, tree rings and fire pits

1998 – 1999

Gas Station Attendant
Bonaventure Gas, Grande Prairie

- served customers and accepted payments
- pumped gas, checked automotive fluids, checked tire pressure
- filled propane vehicles and cylinders
- closed store at end of shift

Education:

1995 - 1998

Completed Grade 12 at Allendale High School

Activities/Interests:

- Hockey, baseball and skate-boarding
- Making and flying model airplanes

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BRAD'S SCANNABLE COMBINATION RÉSUMÉ

BRADLEY ROY
16532 – 101 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T8V 4M7
(780) 555-8778

OBJECTIVE

Apprentice welder position

SUMMARY

Hard worker, fast learner, safety-conscious, strong and physically fit, good vision, eye-hand co-ordination and manual dexterity, enjoy detailed work requiring patience, enjoy working outdoors, require little supervision.

EXPERIENCE

Constructing

- assembled and dismantled scaffolding, ramps, catwalks, shoring and barricades working for M & M Construction for the past three years.
- helped build brick patios, walkways, tree rings and fire pits while employed by City Turf.
- build and fly model airplanes, requiring attention to detail, precision, a steady hand and good co-ordination.

Heavy Lifting

- helped load, unload and move construction materials, tools and equipment; shovel and rake earth to excavate and backfill; shovel cement and other materials into cement mixers, and mix, pour and spread concrete; and demolish buildings, sort and remove debris, clean and pile salvaged materials for M & M Construction.
- broke up existing walkways, laid sod and planted trees for City Turf.

Working with Others

- have worked co-operatively and safely with journeymen and others on M & M construction sites for the past three years.
- worked with a team of landscape workers for City Turf.
- play hockey and baseball in Grande Prairie men's leagues.

WORK HISTORY

Labourer, 1999 – 2002
M & M Construction, Grande Prairie

Landscaping Helper, Summer 1999
City Turf, Grande Prairie

Gas Station Attendant, 1998 – 1999
Bonaventure Gas, Grande Prairie

EDUCATION

High School Diploma, 1998
Allendale High School, Grande Prairie

Construction Site Safety 1999

Standard First Aid 2000

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Brad's Letter to a Potential Employer

16532 – 101 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T5V 4M7

July 4, 2002

R.C. Jacobson
Construction Superintendent
Allied Construction
Box 2323
Grande Prairie, Alberta
T5V 4Z3

Dear Mr. Jacobson:

Are you looking for a responsible young person for a welder apprentice position? If so, I would like to be considered for the position.

I have enjoyed working on a variety of construction sites over the past three years, and would like to begin working towards journeyman certification. Welding particularly interests me because I enjoy building things to precise specifications.

My résumé is enclosed. I will call you next week to find out when it would be convenient to meet and discuss my qualifications.

Sincerely,

Bradley Roy

Encl.

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Ann

After the birth of her first child, Ann took a part-time job as a food and beverage server in a local diner. It worked out well because she enjoyed serving customers, her husband could usually care for the baby while she worked evenings and weekends, and she often earned a fair amount in tips.

Just before her oldest started school, Ann's husband got a new job and they moved from Calgary to Lethbridge. Ann applied for and got a part-time job at a day care, so she could work during the day and be near her younger children at the same time.

Now, Ann's children are all in school during the day and she wants to earn more money. She knows that she enjoys serving people and is good at it.

A friend who works at a local supermarket told her that the manager is looking for a full-time cashier to work weekdays when most of the part-time personnel are not available. Ann has begun preparing to apply by taking stock of her skills. She has listed her work-related experiences, both paid and unpaid, and identified the skills she used and developed through each experience. Following is a list of the skills she identified for two of her experiences.

Ann knows from experience buying groceries that cashiers in supermarkets must be able to serve the public courteously and work efficiently at the same time. These are skills she has and therefore wants to highlight.

Paid Employment as a Server

Activities	Skills and Knowledge
Greeting, assisting and being courteous to customers	responsible adaptable and flexible work co-operatively with others show interest in customers read body language well tactful
Taking food orders	attend to details memorize orders follow procedures
Serving food and beverages	remember co-ordinate tasks attend to details serve customers work well under pressure energetic/alert efficient
Placing orders and working with other employees	work co-operatively organized
Accepting payments and making change	follow procedures calculate in my head accurate demonstrate integrity

Working as a Homemaker

Activities	Skills and Knowledge
Setting up and managing the family budget	keep records/calculate estimate plan investigate/research budget
Planning and preparing meals	plan follow procedures improvise experiment adapt efficient
Doing routine cleaning and laundry	sort organize perform repetitive tasks persistent
Planning family activities	negotiate plan organize
General home maintenance	build/construct operate adjust fix/repair
Home decorating	plan visualize/imagine design/display

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ANN'S CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME

Ann McKinney
1458 Taylor Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1K 4X7
Telephone: (403) 555-9393

OBJECTIVE

Supermarket cashier position.

WORK EXPERIENCE

1996 – Present
Part-time

Day Care Worker

Alicia's Day Care, Lethbridge

- Greet children and parents as they arrive, supervise free play, serve lunch and snacks, and clean up.
- Plan, organize and supervise games, crafts and other learning activities as part of a team responsible for 40 children aged 2 to 4 years.

1991 – 1996
Part-time

Food and Beverage Server

Good Fortune Cafe, Calgary

- Greeted customers and presented menus, helped customers select menu items, and placed orders with the kitchen.
- Served food and beverages for up to 12 tables at a time.
- Prepared itemized bills and accepted payment.

1988 – 1991

Dietary Aide

General Hospital, Calgary

- Assembled patient food trays, delivered trays to wards, and operated dishwasher.

Summer
1987

Server
B&G Fast Food, Calgary

- Entered customer food orders on computerized cash register, assembled food orders, accepted payment and made change.

EDUCATION

High school diploma

Coronation High School, Calgary, 1988

- Courses included English 33, Typing 20 and Business Procedures 10.

PERSONAL

Excellent health, available to work flexible hours.

Active member of the Hillcrest Community League and the Southside Bowling Club.

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ANN'S COMBINATION RÉSUMÉ

Ann McKinney
1458 Taylor Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1K 4X7
Phone: (403) 555-9393

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Five years of experience serving food and beverages in a busy restaurant. Efficiently and courteously served up to 12 tables at a time.
- Six years of experience supervising children and responding to parental concerns in a day care setting.
- Grade 12 education, including Typing 20 and Business Procedures 10.
- Volunteer experience tabulating monies at community bingos and operating concession booths for various charitable organizations.

WORK HISTORY

Day Care Worker,
Alicia's Day Care, Lethbridge
1996 to the present, part-time

- Greet children and parents as they arrive, supervise free play, serve lunch and snacks, and clean up.
- Plan, organize and supervise games, crafts and other learning activities as part of a team responsible for 40 children aged 2 to 4 years.

Food and Beverage Server,
Good Fortune Cafe, Calgary
1991 - 1996, part-time

- Greeted customers and presented menus, helped customers select menu items, and placed orders with the kitchen.
- Served food and beverages.
- Prepared itemized bills and accepted payment.

Dietary Aid,
General Hospital, Calgary
1988 - 1991

- Assembled patient food trays, delivered trays to wards, and operated dishwasher.

Server,
B&G Fast Food, Calgary
Summer 1987

- Entered customer food orders on computerized cash register, assembled food orders, accepted payment and made change.

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ANN'S COVER LETTER

1458 Taylor Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1K 4X7

May 13, 2002

Mr. Don Cameron, Manager
Riteway Foods
456 Main Street
Lethbridge, Alberta
T1K 7G4

Dear Mr. Cameron:

Rita Stobbe, my neighbour, suggested that I contact you. I would like to be considered for a full-time cashier position.

My experience as a food and beverage server has taught me how to deal pleasantly and efficiently with customers, even when working under pressure. I take pride in being able to remember items and prices, and handle cash with a high degree of accuracy. The enclosed résumé briefly describes my experience and education.

I will call you on May 22 to arrange a meeting, if I have not heard from you by then.

Sincerely,

Ann McKinney

Encl.

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Fill out every application form as carefully and completely as you do the first one.

Application Forms

Some employers require applicants to complete an application form instead of submitting a résumé. They find it easier to compare applicants' qualifications if everyone has completed the same form.

Tips for Completing Application Forms

Take copies of your résumé and list of references with you when you are applying for work. When you have to fill out an application form, you can copy names, addresses, telephone numbers, and start/finish dates instead of relying on your memory.

Ask for two copies of the application form and, if possible, take them home. Then you can take as much time as you need to fill out the form neatly and correctly. Use the second copy if you need to redo the application to improve it.

Bring your own good quality pens in case you can't take forms home. Using erasable pens makes correcting errors much easier and neater.

Read the instructions on application forms carefully. If a question does not apply to you put a dash in the blank or write N/A for "not applicable." Don't use short-cuts like "see résumé."

Be honest. It is almost impossible to repair the damage if you are caught in a lie. If your response to a question might be seen as a reason not to interview you, you can write, "will explain in the interview" or counterbalance the negative aspects of your answer with more positive information. You can attach a sheet of paper if you need more room.

Be specific about the type of job you are applying for. Ask the person who gives you the application form about the correct position title for the type of work you want.

List your most recent employer first and work back when you are completing the work experience section of the form. Include start and finish dates, names of companies, job titles and duties, and the positive contributions you made while you worked for that employer.

Write something positive such as "left to pursue other opportunities" in a "Reason For Leaving Past Employment" section. If you say something negative about a former employer or something like "personal reasons," recruiters may get the impression that you have a poor attitude or are not reliable.

In the education and training area of the form, provide specific information such as dates you attended, names of schools, certificates or diplomas you earned. If you have taken training courses or have earned special awards that relate to the work you are applying for, list them as well.

Fill in the "Additional Comments" section if there is one. It is the one place on the form where you can expand on the unique combination of skills and interests you would bring to the work environment.

Don't put down an expected salary figure unless you are sure of the standard salary range for this type of work. State that you are "open to negotiation."

Deliver a clean, crisp-looking form. Do not fold the application form many times or let it get dog-eared.

If you can show samples of your work, bring a portfolio with you. However, don't attach copies of your marks, performance appraisals or letters of recommendation to your application form unless you are asked to do so. All of your important qualifications should be outlined on the application form – don't expect employers to read attachments to find them.

Make personal contact with the employer, if possible, when you deliver the application form. Be business-like and ready to answer any questions the employer may have.

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A Typical APPLICATION FORM

Personal Data			
Name (last)	(first)		(middle)
Phone No. Home		Phone No. Message	
Address (street)			
(city)	(province)		(postal code)
Date Available			
Position Applied For			Salary Expectation
Are you legally entitled to work in Canada? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Would you be willing to work? ☐ Full Time ☐ Part Time ☐ Shifts ☐ Weekends ☐ On-Call			
Are you willing to relocate? ☐ Yes ☐ No		Are you bondable? ☐ Yes ☐ No	

Work History			
Present or Last Employer	From	To	Salary
Address	Telephone		
	Supervisor's Name		
Position Held	Supervisor's Title		
Duties			
Reason for Leaving			
May we contact the employer? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Present or Last Employer	From	To	Salary
Address	Telephone		
	Supervisor's Name		
Position Held	Supervisor's Title		
Duties			
Reason for Leaving			
May we contact the employer? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Present or Last Employer	From	To	Salary
Address	Telephone		
	Supervisor's Name		
Position Held	Supervisor's Title		

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Duties			
Reason for Leaving			
May we contact the employer? ☐ Yes ☐ No			
Education			
Name and Location	Course/Program	Credits Diploma/Degree	Dates
Elementary			
Secondary			
Vocational/Trade			
College/University			
Post Graduate/Other			
Special Courses			

Skill Profile					
Typing ☐	wpm	Data Entry ☐	Shorthand ☐	Speedwriting ☐	Other
Do you have a valid driver's license? ☐ Yes ☐ No				Class	
Other Information					

References			
Give names of three persons not related to you.			
Name	Phone Number	Occupation/Business	Address

I hereby declare that the foregoing information is true and complete to my knowledge. I understand that a false statement may disqualify me from employment, or cause dismissal.

Signature Date

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Your Rights

In Alberta, the Individual's Rights Protection Act makes it illegal for employers to ask you:

- ***for information specific to gender or marital status (e.g. your plans for marriage or child care)***
- ***for your maiden name, "Christian" name or the origin of your name***
- ***for age or date of birth***
- ***for place of birth, or racial origin***
- ***for height or weight***
- ***for a photograph (it would reveal race, gender, etc.)***
- ***about memberships that would indicate race, religious beliefs, ancestry or place of origin***
- ***about present or previous health problems, Workers Compensation claims, or any absence due to stress or mental illness***
- ***about citizenship other than Canadian, or languages not required for the position***
- ***about military service outside of Canada***
- ***for previous addresses outside of Canada.***

Employers are allowed to ask applicants about their ability to satisfy work-related requirements (e.g. ability to work shifts, travel or lift heavy items if the job requires it). Employers can also ask for the name used in previous employment or education to do reference checks.

When an application form has an inappropriate question or an employer asks an inappropriate question in an interview, you can respond in a number of ways.

- ***If you are willing to supply the information and don't mind working in an environment where this type of information is considered important, answer the question. Once you are hired and have established a good working relationship with the employer, look for opportunities to talk to the employer about Alberta's Individual's Rights Protection Act.***
- ***If you are willing to risk putting yourself out of the running for the job, put a dash in the blank or write N/A (for "not applicable"). Or, tactfully let the employer know that the question is inappropriate.***
- ***If you think the employer might simply be unaware of the law and you really want the job (but would be uncomfortable working in an environment where this type of information is considered important), you may decide to answer the question but bring the issue up when you are offered the position.***

If you point out that a question is inappropriate and are not satisfied with an employer's response, you can make a complaint with the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission.

Interviews

A job interview is a business meeting. Both parties want to make a deal: you have skills and the employer has work. Your first task is to show you have the skills the employer needs to get the job done. Your second task is to find out if you are interested in the work. In other words, you should be prepared to ask questions as well as answer questions.

Treat each job interview as an opportunity to learn something and improve your interview skills.

Some employers are better at interviewing than others. Skilled interviewers are good at putting you at ease, and getting down to the business of discovering what you have to offer each other. Not-so-skilled interviewers may ramble or bluster. If that happens, you may have to guide the conversation yourself to ensure that the interviewer gets a clear picture of how your skills fit the requirements of the job.

Before interviews

When an employer or a receptionist calls to set up an interview, politely find out as much as you can.

- Ask for the names and position titles of the people who will be conducting the interview.
- Try to find out what you should expect. For example, will the interview be an initial screening interview (to determine whether you will be interviewed more seriously later) or a selection interview (to make a hiring decision)? Will there be

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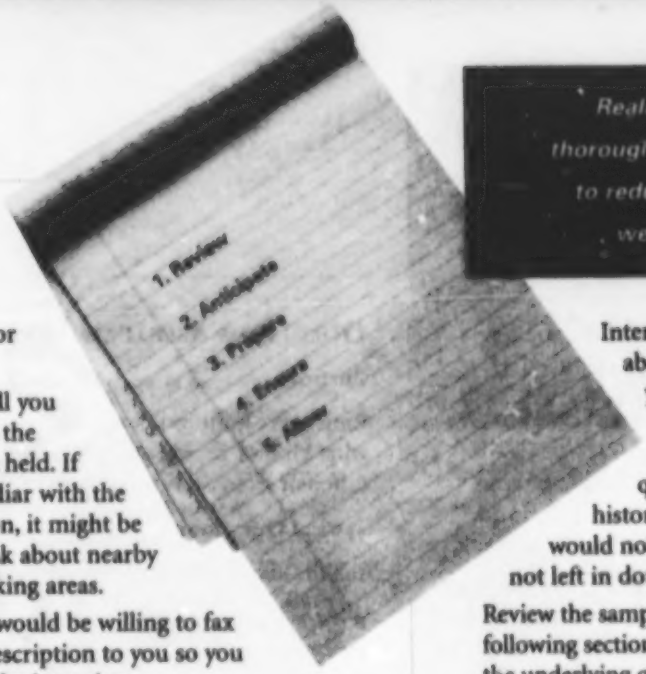

Realistic expectations and thorough preparation are the keys to reducing anxiety and doing well in a job interview.

one interviewer or several?

- The caller will tell you where and when the interview will be held. If you are not familiar with the interview location, it might be a good idea to ask about nearby bus stops or parking areas.
- Ask if the caller would be willing to fax or email a job description to you so you can prepare for the interview.

If you are applying for a job in another community, an employer may want to interview you by telephone. Arrange to receive the call where you can speak comfortably. Then have your résumé and portfolio (if you have one), a pen and some paper, and your list of questions with you when you answer the phone.

Job interview preparation checklist

❑ **Review your résumé** and the information you have gathered about the employer and the work. If you have not already researched the job and the employer, do so! For help, see Chapter 2.

Put yourself in the employer's shoes: what qualifications would you be looking for? Look for clues in the wording of the work description or the job advertisement. Then identify things you have done that show you have those skills.

❑ **Anticipate potential interview questions and prepare answers.**

This is particularly important for questions you hope the employer won't ask! If negative things have happened in your past, be ready to answer questions about them in a positive way. For example, if you made a mistake, briefly admit it and quickly move on to explaining what you have learned from it.

Interviewers may be reluctant to ask about sensitive areas. Mention them yourself if you think the employer may see something as a potential problem (e.g. a disability, qualifications, gaps in your work history, appearance, etc.). Explain why it would not be a problem, so the employer is not left in doubt.

Review the sample interview questions in the following section. Prepare answers that respond to the underlying question as well as the stated question.

Practice your answers in front of a mirror or with a tape recorder, or get a friend to role-play an interview situation with you. If possible, videotape your role-play. Then you can improve both the your verbal and nonverbal communication skills. Your posture, facial expressions and gestures should communicate a positive attitude, not fear or frustration.

If you don't know the typical salary range for the type of work you want, check out occupational descriptions on the Internet such as the *Occupational Profiles* on the Alberta Learning Information Service website (www.alis.gov.ab.ca/occinfo).

❑ **Prepare *your* questions.**

What do you want to know about the job and the organization? You may want to ask questions about the company's goals and objectives, the working conditions, the people you would be working with, or how much travel would be involved.

Be sure to word your questions tactfully, and leave questions about pay and benefits until after you have been offered the job.

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- ❑ **Ensure a good first impression** by deciding what you will wear and planning ahead so you will get to the interview ten to fifteen minutes early. You *must* look neat, clean and well groomed. Dress the way you expect the interviewer to dress.

  If you are not sure how long it will take to get from your home to the interview location, make a test run. When you are there, take note of how the people working there are dressed.

- ❑ **Allow plenty of time for the interview.** For any number of reasons, the interview may take longer than you expect it to. Don't box yourself in by planning to meet someone in an hour or by paying for limited parking time.

Interview questions

No matter how irrelevant or ridiculous an interview question may sound, it generally has a purpose. For example, when interviewers ask questions like "If you could be any vegetable, which vegetable would you choose to be?" they aren't really interested in the content of your answer. They want to see how you handle the unexpected.

Although no two interviewers will ask the exactly same questions, most interview questions fall into one of four categories:

1. questions about you and your skills
2. "what if" and "what did you do when" questions
3. questions about your interest in the job/organization
4. questions about your expectations and plans.

Each type of question has a different purpose.

Questions about you and your skills

Purpose

Employers want to know what you can do for them, what kind of person you are, and what makes you different from other applicants.

Typical Questions

Tell me about yourself.

What is your greatest strength? your greatest weakness?

What five words would you say describe you best?

What kind of working environment do you prefer?

Do you like ... ?

Can you ... ?

Why should we hire you?

These questions are much easier to answer if you have identified your skills (see Chapter 1) and learned as much as you can about the job/employer (see Chapter 2).

Briefly describe your strongest qualifications. If you are asked to describe a personal weakness, choose one that will not prevent you from doing a good job.

Talk about your skills and characteristics, and where you have demonstrated them. For example, if you know the job requires patience (to deal with dissatisfied customers) or persistence (to solve problems), focus on situations in which you have demonstrated those characteristics.

Be tactful but honest. When interviewers ask about your preferences or ability to cope with certain types of situations, the job probably involves those situations. Say you are willing to fulfill job requirements (e.g. work shifts, relocate, retrain) *if that's true.* But if you wouldn't accept shift work, or would not be willing to relocate or retrain, say so. There is no point in being offered work you would not accept.

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Stay positive and up-beat. If there is something negative about your work history, acknowledge the facts and briefly describe any circumstances that were beyond your control. Then quickly move on to something positive. For example, if you have been fired, describe the positive things you learned from the experience. Avoid saying anything negative about previous jobs (e.g. salary, working conditions, supervisors, co-workers). If you must say something negative, back it up with facts that can be checked. Otherwise, employers may see you as a potential trouble-maker.

Avoid getting emotional. Take a deep breath to calm yourself, if necessary (sometimes, interviewers say nasty things just to find out how you will handle the situation, especially if the job involves dealing with difficult people). Smile and keep your head up, even if you think the interview is not going well.

"What if" and "what did you do when" questions.

Purpose

Employers want to know how you will handle situations that may arise on the job.

Typical Questions

What if a customer started yelling at you. What would you do?

What would you do if you saw a co-worker doing something unsafe?

Tell me about a time when someone criticized you in public. What did you do?

Describe a time when a teacher or boss did something you didn't like.

Think of a time when you had a problem working with someone on a project. What did you do?

"What if" questions are sometimes easier to answer than "what did you do when" questions, but they can both be challenging. Skilled interviewers won't give you any clues to let you know what they think your answer to a "what if" should be. Be honest and briefly describe what you think would be the best way to handle the situation.

Don't blurt out the first answer that comes to mind. Take a reasonable amount of time to think through your answer. Interviewers will usually follow up "describe a time when you had to deal with a problem" questions with more detailed questions about exactly what you did and what happened as a result. So describe real situations that you dealt with effectively. Don't make up answers or try to gloss over having handled a situation badly by describing how you would handle a similar situation in the future. Interviewers who ask behaviour-based questions believe that how you reacted in the past is the best predictor of how you will react in the future. They may ignore "how I would do it differently next time" types of answers.

Questions about your interest in the job/organization

Purpose

Employers want to know if you are really interested in the job, and understand the goals and needs of the organization.

Typical Questions

What interests you about our services/products?

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What is your understanding of the nature of the job and the company?

What do you know about our company? our products?

Why do you want to work here?

Why did you apply for this position?

You will certainly stand out from other applicants if you can answer this type of question well! This is where it really pays off to have done some research before the interview.

Summarize what you know about the company, and its goals, operations and products. Then ask any questions you may have about the organization's goals and challenges. Show interest in helping the organization overcome its challenges and achieve its goals.

Questions about your plans and expectations

Purpose

Employers want to know if your expectations are realistic, and you will stick around long enough to make it worthwhile to train you.

Sample Questions

What are your long range goals? Are you thinking of going back to school or college?

Why have you changed jobs so many times? Don't you think you are over-qualified for this job?

What salary and benefits do you expect?

Let the employer know you won't quit after a short time. Talk about how the job fits into your career plans, but be brief. Interviewers are more interested in hearing about what you can do for the organization, than what the organization can do for you.

If you have changed jobs many times, explain why you felt it was necessary and emphasize that you expect to stay longer in this job (if that's true).

Body Language

Your mannerisms, gestures, body movements, posture, tone of voice, and expressions communicate just as much as your words do.

For example, the position of your body while you are speaking and listening says a lot about how interested you are. Slouching or being too laid-back destroys a positive image, so sit up straight or lean forward slightly.

Cultural background determines how body language is interpreted.

Eye contact is a good example. In some cultures, making eye contact is considered disrespectful. However, most Canadian interviewers will think you are trying to hide something if you don't make eye contact in a job interview.

Watch the interviewer's body language for clues about how well you are doing.

If the interviewer appears confused, ask if he or she would like you to explain something further.

If the interviewer looks bored, change gears and show more energy, or take the hint that the interview is near an end.

If you are over-qualified for the position, stress your adaptability and flexibility, and your willingness to assume more responsibility.

Avoid discussing salary and benefits until after a job offer has been made. Understandably, employers want to find out what hiring you will cost them. However, if you state a figure they consider too high, you will not be seriously considered for the position. If your figure is low, that's all you will be offered.

If the interviewer persists, state the typical salary range for the type of work you are discussing and that you expect a reasonable salary for someone with your qualifications. If appropriate, let the employer know you are open to negotiation depending on the benefits offered.

If you don't know the typical salary range, say that you would like to research the pay and benefits for similar jobs before you commit yourself.

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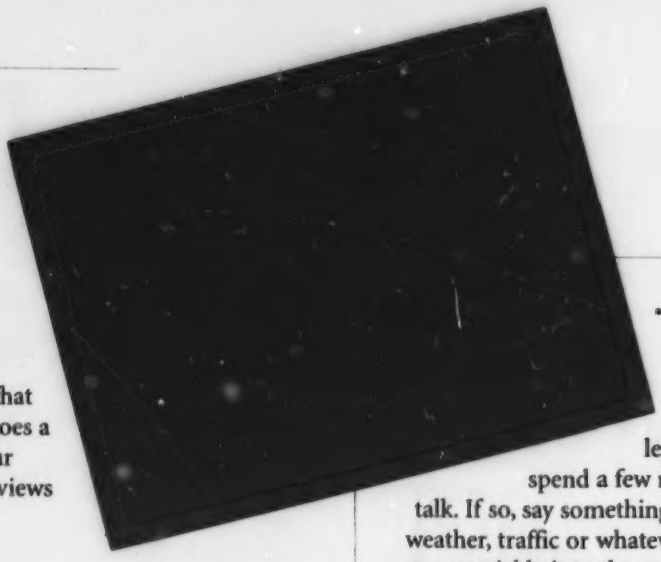

Handling interviews

Having a general idea of what to expect in an interview goes a long way to improving your confidence. Well-run interviews have three stages:

1. a short introduction
2. an exchange of information (both you and the interviewer ask and answer questions)
3. a closing that wraps up the interview.

Most interviewers "size up" applicants in the first minute or two. If their first impression is negative, you have an uphill battle to turn that impression around. Therefore, pay attention to how you appear and what you do when you first arrive. You want to do your best to create a good first impression.

- Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early, and briefly let the receptionist know you have arrived.
- If you have to wait a few minutes, use the time to take a few deep breaths and try to look confident. Don't be afraid to look at people and smile.
- If other job applicants are waiting in the reception area too, and you imagine that they all have better qualifications than you do, DON'T GIVE UP. Remember that employers are looking for personal teamwork and fundamental skills as well as technical (specialized) skills. You may have just the combination the employer is looking for.
- Don't smoke, chew gum or drink coffee, and try not to fidget.
- Be pleasant, honest and sincere with everyone in the office. Interviewers may ask other staff members for their opinions.
- When you first meet the interviewer(s), introduce yourself, shake hands firmly and make eye contact.
- Remain standing until you are offered a chair, then sit up straight.
- Follow the interviewer's lead. The interviewer may spend a few moments making small talk. If so, say something positive about the weather, traffic or whatever, but be prepared to move quickly into the main part of the interview when the interviewer is ready to do so.

When you get to the main part of an interview, take every opportunity you are given to talk about your skills, knowledge and achievements. Emphasize what you can contribute to the organization. Avoid mentioning your needs until after a job offer is made.

- Point out connections between your capabilities and the employer's needs, even if they seem obvious to you.
- Avoid "yes" and "no" answers. Answer the employer's underlying question as well as the stated question.
- Follow the interviewer's lead. If the interview seems quite "structured" (each applicant is asked the same questions in the same order regardless of their answers), it is generally best to save your questions until the end.
- If the interviewer asks more "open" questions (for example, "Why are you interested in this position?") and bases the next question on your answer, you will have more opportunities to ask questions and lead the conversation toward a discussion of your strongest qualifications.
- Show your interest in the job by looking interested (posture, facial expressions and other body language), by asking informed questions, and by listening carefully to the answers.
- If you don't understand a question, politely ask the interviewer to rephrase the question. If you don't know the answer, say so.

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- Take the time you need to think about difficult questions. Don't think out loud.
- Cheerfully agree with appropriate requests (e.g. to fill out application forms or supply references).
- If the employer raises an issue such as "you've been out of the work force a long time" or "you've always worked in the same type of environment," deal with the employer's concern directly. Explain why it would not be a problem. For example, tell the employer how you have kept up to date, or draw the employer's attention to how the skills you developed in your previous jobs relate to this job.

Near the end of the interview, the interviewer should tell you about how and when the successful candidate will be selected. Summarize your skills, state that you are very interested in the position (if you still are), and ask any remaining questions you may have about the work.

If you are comfortable doing so, ask if it would be acceptable for you to follow up by calling the interviewer and, if so, when you should call.

Thank the interviewer(s), give the interviewer a firm handshake if the interviewer offers a hand, and leave promptly in a positive manner.

After interviews

Regardless of the outcome of an interview, it is a good idea to write a brief letter of thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration. It sets you apart from other applicants, and may remind the interviewer about you and your strongest qualifications. You can also use your letter to *briefly* supply additional information.

A hand-written letter or note is acceptable if your writing is easy to read. Write the letter while the interview is still fresh in your mind.

Learn from each interview by asking yourself the following questions.

- Did the interviewer ask questions that I was not prepared for? If so, how can I prepare better for future interviews?
- Did I forget to ask anything about the job/organization?
- Did I emphasize the connection between my skills and the skills required for the job?
- Was I pleasant, honest and sincere?
- Did I answer the interviewer's underlying concerns as well as the questions asked?
- Did I address the employer's concerns in a positive way?
- Did I sum up my skills, then leave promptly and politely at the end of the interview?

Take note of what you want to do differently next time.

Briefly record your impressions of the interview and recommendations for improvement in future interviews. Include names, what was discussed, salary figures and anything else you might need to remember if you are offered the job.

If you promised to call the interviewer on a certain date, make sure to put a reminder on your calendar. If the employer said you should expect a call by a certain date, note the date on your calendar and call if you have not heard anything by then.

Don't assume you have a job until an employer tells you when to start. Keep looking and following up other opportunities, even after several interviews have gone very well. If a job you thought was going to come through does not, you won't be so disappointed or have wasted time waiting.

If you receive several job offers, you can choose the job you like best. You may want to ask your employer of choice for a written offer letter so you know it is safe to turn down the others.

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GOING THE DISTANCE

Rejection letters and other disappointments happen in any job search. Realistic expectations about how long the search will take, a willingness to learn from your experiences, and a healthy, balanced lifestyle will help you stay positive and handle rejection constructively.

When you receive a rejection letter, read it carefully to see if it contains any clues about why you didn't get the job. If it does, you can learn from it. Everyone gets rejected sometime. It is what you do with the rejection – how you handle it and use it to your advantage – that makes all the difference.

Handling Rejection

If you are feeling rejected, check the statements that describe your thoughts right now.

❑ **You hoped you would find work a lot faster, and without doing the preparatory work described in Chapters 1 and 2.**

If you have found work relatively easily in the past, your expectations for this job search may be unrealistic. Fortunately, it is never too late to put some serious effort into identifying your skills (Chapter 1) and finding suitable work opportunities (Chapter 2).

❑ **Your applications usually don't make it past the "paper screening" stage – you have not been invited for many interviews.**

There are a number of possible reasons you haven't been invited for an interview. For example, you may not have the required skills or education, your skills may be out of date, other applicants may have better qualifications, or your application did not clearly communicate that you are qualified.

If there is a good chance you haven't communicated your qualifications very well on paper, take another look at your résumé. Does it tell employers clearly and concisely what you can do and what sort of person you are? If not, rewrite it.

The most direct way to find out why you haven't been invited for an interview is to ask. Call employers and explain that you are trying to improve your job search skills and would like some feedback on your application. You have nothing to lose and you could get some very valuable advice.

If an employer seems to think you don't have the qualifications required, don't argue. Show your résumés and cover letters to people you respect, including at least one employment counsellor (see "Where To Get More Help" at the end of this chapter). Ask for suggestions about how you can communicate your qualifications more effectively.

❑ **You have not found many suitable job openings.**

There are two possibilities you should consider.

1. There are very few jobs that satisfy your work objective.
2. You need to put more effort into finding suitable opportunities.

Before you assume that the first possibility is the case, be honest with yourself about how much time and effort you have put into networking, contacting employers and other methods of finding work opportunities. If you can honestly say you have researched the possibilities well, you may have to broaden your work search targets or be willing to move. Discuss your situation with a career or employment counsellor, or someone whose judgement you respect.

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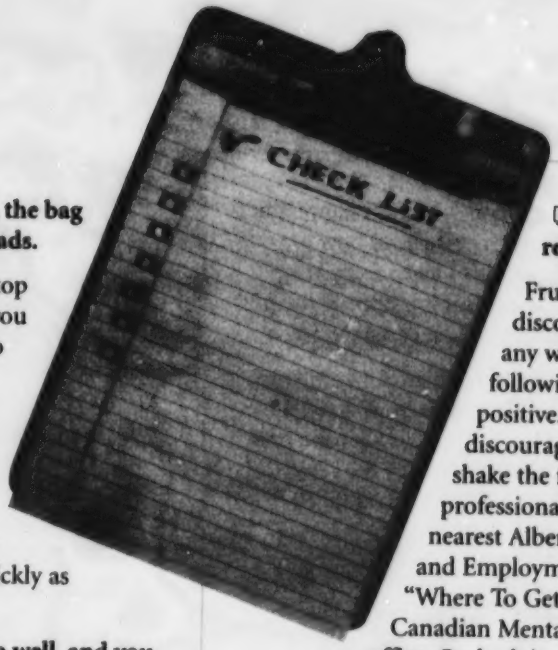

❑ **You really thought you had a job in the bag so you stopped looking for other leads.**

No matter how sure you are, don't stop looking for other possibilities until you have an offer on paper. There are too many things that can go wrong between a tentative verbal offer and an official written offer.

If you have learned this tough lesson the hard way, don't waste any more of your precious time. Get back to work looking for work as quickly as you can.

❑ **You got an interview, it seemed to go well, and you have no idea why someone else got the job.**

When there are a number of well-qualified applicants applying for the same job, employers have to make some very difficult decisions. The differences between successful applicants and unsuccessful ones may be hard to identify.

Unfortunately, all the preparation in the world won't get you a job if the "chemistry" between you and the interviewer just isn't right. When this happens, talk to an understanding friend about it. Expressing your frustration can help you to put the experience behind you, and move on.

❑ **You just had an interview, and it didn't go very well.**

If you were not well prepared, decide what you will do differently to be better prepared next time. If you don't have the required skills, you may need to rethink your work search targets or do more research about specific work opportunities before you apply for them. Otherwise, chalk it up to experience and move on.

❑ **You are fed up and ready to give up.**

Frustration and discouragement will sabotage any work search. Read the following section on staying positive. If you are still feeling discouraged and can't seem to shake the feeling, talk to a professional counsellor. Contact the nearest Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre (see "Where To Get More Help" below) or Canadian Mental Health Association office. Or, look in the Yellow Pages under "Employment Counselling" to find other agencies that may be able to help you.

Staying Positive

There are a variety of things you can do to cope with the ups and downs that everyone experiences during a work search. Learning to handle rejection constructively is one. Several other strategies are outlined below. If you can think of other methods of coping that have helped you through stressful times in the past, add them to the list and use them this time too.

Tips for staying positive

Take good care of yourself. Eat well-balanced meals regularly, and get plenty of rest. Exercise and enjoy the outdoors. Ten minutes on the move can make a world of difference to how you feel.

Schedule regular breaks in your day and take them. Make your breaks short, but get away from work search activities completely.

Seek out people who can give you emotional support. Tell family members and friends about what you are doing and how things are going. They may be worried about how the changes in your life will affect them.

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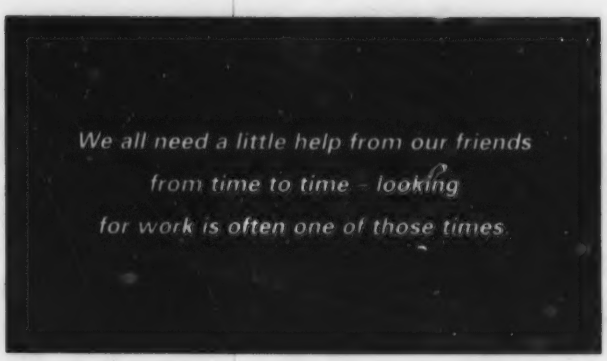
Keeping lines of communication open will help them too.

If your family members or friends are interested, let them help you by brainstorming ideas with you, networking for you, and reviewing draft applications and résumés.

You may have to cut back on your expenses, but try to keep your social life as normal as you can.



Contact the nearest Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre. Ask about workshops and job clubs operating in your area. Or, make an appointment to speak with an employment or career advisor.

Set realistic short-term goals, and reward yourself when you achieve them. For example, decide how many direct contacts (in person, over the telephone, by mail) you should be able to make each day.

Make a list of things that make you feel good, but don't cost too much in time or preparation (for example, a longer walk than usual). Use these activities as rewards when you have achieved the day's objectives.

Set a time limit on how long you will allow yourself to feel "down," preferably no more than a few hours. Then start working your way back up again.

Keep growing. Do lots of reading on current technological trends, and subjects related to your work or areas of interest. Take short courses, and attend conferences and seminars. If they might be helpful to you, read books or attend workshops on time management, problem-solving, communication, self-esteem, relaxation, or positive thinking.

Help others. Get a better perspective on your own troubles by reaching out to help others. Do volunteer work that will make use of your skills, give you needed experience, or allow you to meet people who could be helpful in your job search.

Take temporary or part-time work to help keep your spirits up, as well as provide short-term income. If your employers are impressed with your performance, they may offer you full-time work or pass on information about work opportunities they hear about.

A major disadvantage to taking temporary or part-time work is that it decreases the amount of time and energy you can devote to your job search. Only you can decide if the advantages outweigh this disadvantage in your case.

Be kind to yourself. Watch out for negative thoughts. If you catch yourself thinking "I can't...," "I'm no good at...," "It's impossible...," STOP. Try to reframe and think in more positive terms. For example, "I can learn from this mistake" instead of "I'm such a fool."

Read every flattering thing (letter of praise, recommendation, performance appraisal) you have ever received. Keep them handy and read them whenever you are feeling down.

Make a list of the things that worry you and brainstorm solutions with a friend or counsellor.

Don't lose your sense of humour. What makes you laugh? Cartoons? Recordings of comedians? Certain types of television shows? Being with certain friends? Laughter is a wonderful emotional release, so use it as often as you can.

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Looking Ahead

Be ready to:

- negotiate when employers offer you work, and
- wrap up your work search in a way that will make your next one easier.

When you have been looking for work for some time and you finally get a job offer, it is tempting to jump and shout YES. But hold on.

Take some time to consider the advantages and disadvantages of accepting the job, and negotiate the best possible terms of employment (hours, salary, benefits). Did you like the feel of the place when you went for an interview? Can you afford to wait for a better opportunity? Will you be satisfied with the salary and benefits the employer is offering?

If you have questions or concerns about the terms of employment, talk them over with the employer *before* you accept the position. (You have no bargaining power if you have already accepted the job.) Make it clear you are interested in the job, then ask if there is any room to negotiate salary and/or benefits. For example, if the salary offer is lower than you expected, you may be able to negotiate an increase in pay (starting now or in a few months), health and/or dental insurance coverage, an extra week of holiday time, a parking stall, or whatever else you want (within reason, of course!).

If you decide to turn a job offer down, be tactful and express your appreciation for the offer.

If you decide to accept, show your enthusiasm. If you have negotiated any special terms of employment, make sure they are included in the written job offer and confirm them in your letter of acceptance.

Wrap up your work search by letting others know you have a new job.

- If you are currently employed, submit a tactfully-worded letter of resignation that gives your employer reasonable notice (at least two weeks). You may need a letter of reference in the future, so don't burn any bridges behind you!
- Let your references and contacts know that you have accepted a position, and thank them for their help.
- Withdraw any other applications you have in the works by letting employers know you have accepted a position.

Make your next work search easier

Odds are, you will change jobs a number of times over the course of your career. Make your next transition easier by:

- creating and maintaining a work-related portfolio. Keep adding notes and things like letters of appreciation and performance appraisals, so updating your résumé will be much easier next time
- staying in touch with people who have been supportive and helpful
- keeping informed about new developments in your field/industry, reading/watching news articles about changes in the labour market, and anticipating how changes are likely to affect your work
- paying attention to your feelings and looking for ways to make your work life as meaningful and rewarding as possible.

Taking charge of your career by looking ahead will give you a sense of confidence and freedom that goes well beyond ordinary job security.

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WHERE TO GET MORE HELP

Resources

Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website

www.alis.gov.ab.ca

Alberta's leading on-line source for career, learning and employment information. Here you will find the resources you need for making the most of your future.

Career and Workplace Resources

You can obtain the following print, audio and video resources on-line through the ALIS website at **www.alis.gov.ab.ca/careershop**, or view copies at any Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centre. Where indicated, publications are available free of charge to Alberta and NWT residents.

Adult Back to School Planner
(free book)

Advanced Techniques for Work Search
(free book)

Alberta Careers Beyond 2000 Update
(free book about the outlook for various occupational fields and industries in Alberta)

Career Marketing
(18-minute video about marketing yourself in the new world of work)

Change and Transitions
(free book for people making changes)

Creating a New Future: The Job-Loss Workbook
(free book)

Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities: Tips for Job Seekers
(free book)

Finding Out: How to Get the Information You Need to Make the Choices You Want
(free book)

It's About Time...to choose a post-secondary education program
(free book)

Job Search: The Product is You
(34-minute video about three job seekers)

Making It Work
(15-minute video about how work-related attitudes)

Positive Works II
(free book about changing negative attitudes and beliefs into positive ones)

Radical Change in the World of Work: The Workbook
(free book)

Skills Plus Handbook: Discovering Your Personal Career Assets
(free book)

Volunteering: How to Build Your Career by Helping Others
(free book)

Woman Today, Edition 1 – Success on Your Own Terms
(free magazine for women who want to make positive changes in their lives)

Woman Today, Edition 2 – Making It Work!
(free magazine for women getting ready to step into the world of paid work)

Work Changes: Preparing for Work in a Changing World
(68-minute audio tape)

Workability Handbook
(free book about what you need to find and keep work)

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Services

Alberta Career Information Hotline

Call the Hotline for answers to your questions about:

- Career planning
- Occupations
- Job search skills
- Education options
- Information and referrals.

Phone: 1-800-661-3753 toll-free in Alberta

Phone: 780-422-4266 in Edmonton

Hearing impaired access, phone: 1-800-232-7215 for message relay service or 422-5283 for TDD service in Edmonton

E-mail: info@alis.gov.ab.ca

Website: www.alis.gov.ab.ca/hotline

Alberta Human Resources and Employment

Alberta Human Resources and Employment service centres are located throughout the province. They have information on occupations, career options, education programs and funding, and finding work. Many offices have a career resource centre with books, newspapers, magazines, software and audio/video materials. They also may have computers for Internet use and word processing, and phones and fax machines to use with your work search. You can also talk to a career consultant. These services may be offered by other agencies in your community. Call the Career Information Hotline for the office closest to you.

Youth Connections

Youth Connections offices provide career and employment service for people between the ages of 16 and 24. Offices are located in communities across Alberta. Contact the Career Information Hotline for the location nearest you. You can also check out the Youth Connections web link at www.youthconnections.gov.ab.ca

Check the web link for Youth Connections at www.alis.gov.ab.ca Click on Alberta Career Services; or call the Career Information Hotline at

1-800-661-3753. In Edmonton call 422-4266

Employment Standards

Phone: (780) 427-3731 or toll-free in Alberta, dial 310-0000 and then 427-3731
Website: www.gov.ab.ca/hre/employmentstandards

Employment standards are minimum standards of employment for employers and employees in the workplace. You can get a free copy of the Employment Standards Guide by phoning the office or downloading it from the website.

Workplace Health and Safety

Phone: 1-866-415-8690
Website: www.whs.gov.ab.ca

Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S) helps employers and workers ensure safe, healthy and productive workplaces in Alberta. More than 200 free publications on safety are available on the website or by phone request. You can also phone for confidential advice.

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We'd Like to Hear From You ...

JOB SEEKER'S HANDBOOK

Date

Did you find the information in this publication useful? In what way?

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How could we improve it?

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Do you have any suggestions for other products that would be of value to you?

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Alberta Human Resources and Employment
6th Floor, 9940 - 106 Street,
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2V1
Fax: 780-422-5319

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